University of Alberta

Inclusion of English as a Second Language (ESL) Students in Mainstream Classrooms

by

Carmen Bird

A Thesis

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Abstract

This study addresses some needs of ESL learners in regular classrooms, an inclusive support system, and improving teaching practices at a junior high school level.

Placing ESL students in ability groups or in specialized second-language classrooms seems to be inefficient and segregating. It not only isolates ESL students from regular classroom instruction and appropriate English-language models, but also excludes them from mainstream peer networks.

The discussion of this ethnographic research centers on how ESL students increase their self-confidence and English-language skills when the extra academic and language assistance they often require is provided to them along with mainstream students in support groups. Additionally, this study addresses the key role of classroom environment in enhancing ESL students' participation in curricular activities and the importance of building a support network to include ESL students in the overall school system. Moreover, this study also reveals that teachers are critical promoters of ESL students' cultural and academic integration into the school. In addition to this, this study explores issues concerning clarity of instruction for ESL students and making the content instruction more comprehensible for them.

I dedicate this master's thesis to the memory of my parents,

Carmen and Jaime, who passed away while I was doing my research.

They taught me how to succeed in my chosen career.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I obtained my Bachelor of Education degree with a major in English in 1986. My undergraduate education was focused, primarily, on acquiring skills that would aid me in developing the ability to teach English to students whose first language was not English. Accordingly, I practiced as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in private, public, and American immersion high schools in Colombia, South America. Teaching provided me with a great deal of experience in meeting the needs of students who were learning the English language. Both my formal education and my teaching experience were focused mainly on issues related to finding and applying better techniques to learn "English as communication." Enright and McCloskey (1985) pointed out that children learn language as a medium of communication rather than as a curriculum subject with sets of isolated topics, facts, or skills; thus *language* is viewed as a verb (doing language or communicating) rather than as a noun (knowledge of language). Similarly, *language proficiency* is defined as speakers' successful accomplishment of their communicative intentions across a wide variety of social settings. This is often referred to as *communicative competence* (p. 434).

I immigrated to Canada in 1990, hoping to further my education and obtain better employment. Once in Canada, I realized that my aspirations of becoming better educated were accompanied by endless problematic and frustrating barriers. Porter (1965) argued that there are social barriers to educational opportunities that have been built into the Canadian social structure as it has developed and psychological barriers that are either endowed or inculcated (p. 168). Although I was fluent in English, I felt that, regardless of an immigrant's English-language proficiency, level of adaptation to the Anglo-Saxon culture, maturity, and ability to cope with cultural shock and change, that individual would be perceived as "different." Consequently, he or she would experience differential treatment at all levels of the social and educational spectrum. I became concerned with

ethnicity and access to education. Fleras and Elliott (1996) remarked that minorities immersed in ethnicity could hardly hope to succeed in Canada. Majority prejudice against ethnic differences could also hinder acceptance (p. 113).

I perceived that linguistic and cultural differences would result in barriers not only to equal access, but also to integration into the educational system. More than that, I sensed that it was through this educational system that it was possible to come into conflict with cultural behaviors and the mother tongue. I became concerned with the way English as a Second Language students were being integrated into the school system. Cummins (1981) stressed that some minority students are caught between two cultural groups, unable to identify comfortably with either. The values of the home culture are often discredited, but students are unable to become integrated into the wider society (p. 15). As I met some immigrant high school students, I realized that some of them were relating English proficiency and Canadian culture with power. Thus, they were either neglecting their own cultural background and language or segregating within their own ethnic group. Frequent comments made by some youths thus confirmed the general assumption among some of them that "people of their country are backward, poor, uneducated and have no technology" (Seifeddine, 1994, p. 27). With no power, some Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were finding themselves isolated in their learning process, not only at school, but also at home. Dorrington (1995) claimed that young people are in the most danger of becoming marginalized from both their country and the North American society (p. 123). More important, I began to realize that some ESL students' needs were unmet and unaddressed. Moreover, many ESL students suffered from mainstream teachers' and students' unwillingness to relate to them. In fact, I perceived that some ESL students were experiencing animosity and unequal treatment because of teachers' perceptions of ESL students' lack of English fluency. Zabel and Zabel (1996) stressed that a student's inability to communicate effectively or understand the language of instruction can lead to misunderstandings of ability and behavior and unequal

treatment at school. The lack of English proficiency results in exclusion from effective participation in the educational programs offered by the school (p. 100). I also perceived that other ESL students were dropping out because of a lack of support and understanding when they attempt to adjust to the school system. However, a few ESL students were able to adapt better than others. I concluded that the current educational system seemed to be unsuitable for those LEP students.

When I entered the University of Alberta in the fall of 1995, I developed a sensitivity towards issues that involved better ways to help ESL students to succeed at school. I became interested in culture, language, and other related topics concerning educational and career opportunities for ESL students in Canada. My long journey and personal experiences pursuing educational and employment opportunities reaffirmed that immigrants to Canada could gain a "better status" and become empowered through education and that good English communication skills were necessary to access that power. Pierce (1995), citing Heller (1987), remarked that it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites, and it is through language that a person gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak (p. 13). ESL students who were not accessing education needed to have equal educational opportunities. ESL students who were not adjusting culturally and academically to the Canadian educational system needed to be provided with meaningful and successful experiences so that they could remain in school and complete their high school diploma and pursue further education as any other Canadian citizen would do. Thomas (1987) claimed that unfair institutional practices need to be identified and made fair; and that people who currently do not have equal access to programs, training, and jobs need to be provided with equal access (p. 106). I feel that immigrants do not need to be penalized educationally, socially or economically for their race or ethnic backgrounds. Fleras and Elliott (1996) remarked that antiracism is concerned with the identification and removal of discriminatory barriers, both personal and

systematic, at interpersonal and institutional levels. Minority underachievement is not necessarily caused by cultural differences, and cross-cultural understanding will not contribute to any fundamental change (p. 378). Fleras and Elliott, referring to the Ministry of Education and Training (1993), concluded that improving minority status depends on removing the behavioral and structural components of racial inequality, along with the power and privileges that sustain racism through institutional policies, practices, and procedures (p. 378).

In order to gain first-hand knowledge of the issues of quality and equality of education for ESL students, I decided to explore ESL students' real school-life experiences. For approximately three months I conducted qualitative research in a junior high school located in Southeast Edmonton. My focus question, How are ESL students included in regular classrooms? encouraged me to search consistently for practical ways to make this happen. Inclusion of ESL students into mainstream classrooms emerged as a potential solution for ESL students' unequal and differential treatment at school. Sapon-Shevin (1992) reaffirmed that "when conscientiously implemented, inclusive, regular classrooms become more flexible, accommodating learning environment for all children" (p. 42). By far one of the most important reasons to conduct my research study was the social value of equality. Isolating ESL students in a segregated learning environment created negative messages to mainstream students that generated stereotypical behaviors. For the most part, research on inclusion had been concerned with the integration of physically or mentally disabled students into mainstream classrooms. Thus, ESL students who represent a generally able population, but who are temporally limited by their proficiency in English, were not benefiting from the research concerning inclusion. I understood that there was a need to create an inclusive, effective, cohesive, and supportive learning environment for ESL students so that they could be treated fairly and equally at school. We all have an equal right to education and, more importantly, to quality of education. Improving teaching practices and dynamics to better meet students' diverse

needs must be a social and educational commitment. "Educating for diversity should engage everyone because it involves educating for the world in which they live" (Smith, 1995, p. 228).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study was intended to identify a more inclusive and effective learning environment for ESL students in regular classrooms. Sapon-Shevin (1992) commented that in traditional classrooms, all children have abilities and strengths, as well as areas in which they require intensive instruction. As educators we must make decisions about how to respond to these differences in educationally and ethically appropriate ways (p. 39). The following research questions were addressed:

1. What kind of inclusive environment do ESL junior high school students experience in mainstream classrooms?

2. What impact will these issues have on ESL students' success or failure at school?

Based on the research findings, it was fundamental to address one last question:

3. How could ESL students be better included in mainstream classrooms?

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1995) remarked that teachers are the most powerful influences on students' behaviors and learning. Their attitudes, expectations, behavior, and actions strongly affect students (p. 159). This research study examined some teaching practices and teachers' behaviors towards both mainstream and ESL students, ESL and mainstream students' relationships, interactions and attitudes at school, as well as the role of the school administration in integrating ESL students into the school system. The research findings are aimed at providing direction to the school administration on what could be done to achieve more successful integration of ESL students into the school. It is intended to provide suggestions on how some teaching practices could become more inclusive for mainstreamed ESL students. Moreover, it is intended to provide suggestions

on how to create a more cohesive learning environment for ESL students in the overall school environment.

ESL students' successful cultural and academic integration into the school is not and must not be considered a unilateral process. Quite the opposite! It involves the school community at large. The increasing ESL student population in Alberta schools deserve an equal right to an effective education and significant attention when it comes to including them in mainstream classrooms. An inclusive learning environment for ESL students will guard against marginalization and isolation not only from instruction, but also from peer networks and support at school.

Delimitations, Assumptions, and Limitations

Delimitations

The study was delimited to

1. one group of students; more specifically, to a group of 13 English as a Second Language students in mainstream classrooms;
2. a focus on one junior high school in Edmonton, Alberta;
3. observation of the classroom dynamics of Grades 7 and 8 social studies and language arts classes, and, on a few occasions, of Grade 8 science and physical education classes;
4. data collected by participant observation from April 1997 to June 1997. During this period of time, 14 participants were interviewed and observed in depth;
5. the investigation of one issue: How are ESL students included in mainstream classrooms?
6. data gathered from government and school policies; and from interviews with students, teachers, the school facilitator, and the school principal.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for my study:

1. My teaching credentials would give participants in the study the confidence to relate to me on a professional basis.

2. ESL students were relating to and interacting differently with their mainstream peers and teachers.

3. The purpose of my research study and my ethnic background provided ESL students with the confidence to relate to me on an informal basis.

Limitations

1. The research study was conducted on a small group of students in a junior high school.

2. The recording equipment made some ESL students apprehensive. Thus, some students who were interviewed spoke so softly that some of the discussion was inaudible.

3. A great portion of this research study was limited by the fact that I relied on data gathered from participant observation rather than on ESL students' insights into the focus question.

4. This research study was limited by a lack of official information on the school's modified program.

Definition of Terms

AGE CAP: age cap of 19 years of age for high school attendance

CALP: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING: an educational process in which everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school

community in the course of having his or her educational needs met (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 3).

INTEGRATION: a process whereby individuals intermingle with each other at all institutional levels. Integration represents a two-way process by which the dominant and the subordinate sectors are brought together in a single comprehensive lifestyle, without either losing its sense of distinctiveness (Fleras & Elliott, 1996, p. 17).

LEP: Less English proficient

MAINSTREAMING: the inclusion of special-education students in regular classrooms. According to Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1995), it is a classroom in which the school curriculum is delivered through the medium of English and has not been modified for non-native English speakers.

SEGREGATION: forced separation among people who live apart from each other, socially and geographically (Fleras & Elliott, 1996, p. 17).

TONI II: Test of Nonverbal Intelligence

WOODCOCK-MUNOZ: a language survey designed to determine the cutoff points of the five levels CALP.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background to the Study

Traditionally, English as a Second Language students have experienced difficulties in adapting to the Canadian educational system. Often these challenges have been related to language and culture; more specifically, to their lack of good English communication skills and to cultural shock during their first years in Canadian schools.

Fleras and Elliott (1996) remarked that, historically, education was inseparable from the amalgamation of cultures into the mainstream. The educational system reflected a fundamental commitment to monoculturalism (p. 373). This rationale could suggest that the Canadian educational system appeared to be seen as a conformist model aimed at absorbing immigrant children directly into the educational system and the society by depriving them of their home language and culture. Fleras and Elliott further observed that in the past all aspects of schooling, from teachers and textbooks to policy and curriculum, were included in the principles of Anglo conformity. Special curricula or references to other languages or cultures were rejected as inconsistent with the educational needs of Canadian society building (p. 373). However, the concept of multicultural education emerged as a solution to the challenges of accommodating the increasing cultural diversity in Canadian schools. Fleras and Elliott (1996; citing Henry et al., 1995), remarked that "the new focus in education is increasingly to be responsive to diversity, and to create a learning environment that acknowledges the culture of its students" (p. 374). Nevertheless, today this "practical" solution has not proven to be a positive one for immigrant students in Canadian schools. Fleras and Elliot, citing the *Toronto Star* (February 11, 1995) commented that "there is a sense in which the public school system is failing certain minorities by not giving them the proper education" (p. 374).

ESL students enrolled in Alberta schools currently face various challenges to integrate culturally and academically into the school system. Roessingh and Watt (1994)

pointed out that a growing number of researchers (Grey, 1991; Minicuci, 1992; Sinclair, 1992; Spencer, 1988) have indicated that "language minority students do not experience academic success in schools, but rather suffer from frustration and marginalization, culminating in dropout" (p. 284). Roessingh and Watt further noted that studies conducted by Alberta Education (1992) reported a 61% dropout for ESL secondary students in Alberta (p. 284). However, Roessingh and Watt (1994) added that their studies conducted "in a large, comprehensive urban high school in Alberta" (p. 291) revealed that the overall ESL dropout rate for 232 students was 74%, a figure substantially higher than that cited in Alberta Education's study of ESL students. On the other hand, in studies conducted by the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers in Edmonton, Seifeddine (1994) suggested that ESL students' issues and concerns remain excluded from the school curriculum. Seifeddine stressed that the school curriculum denies mainstream peers the opportunity to learn about the positive aspects of immigrant students' culture and their contribution to Canadian society and world history in general (p. 32). Additionally, empirical evidence suggests that for various reasons ranging from economic resources to conflicts of schedules, ESL students remain excluded from participating in extracurricular activities as well. Finally, studies that are being conducted by the Catholic School Board in conjunction with the University of Alberta on ESL programs in Edmonton's schools have suggested that most ESL students experience difficulty understanding and following the different content areas of instruction in mainstream classrooms. However, they often lack proper extra-academic and language support. For the most part, this common approach to mainstreaming ESL students is better known as the *sink or swim* approach. Stein (1986) remarked that the essence of sink or swim politics entails Anglo conformity (p. 8). Placing ESL students in mainstream classrooms without the proper academic and language support suggests to ESL students that they either accept or embrace and adapt to the school curriculum as is or leave the school system.

Although multicultural education has been viewed from different perspectives, it could be argued that it centers on trivial issues of cultural diversity such as the different world religions, languages, ethnic cultures, and food. Nieto (1992) stressed that from the "left" side of the political spectrum, multicultural education has been assailed for its focus only on superficial aspects of cultural diversity and its failure to address the institutionalized racism that is embedded in the structures of our societies (p. xvii). However, as the number of unsuccessful and unhappy ESL students in Alberta schools remains consistently high and most ESL students appear not to integrate well culturally and academically into the Canadian school system, multicultural education has proven to be a myth. Seifeddine (1994) remarked that some students give up many aspects of their culture and language to "fit into" school and Canadian society (p. 27). It could be argued that when ESL students leave school and go home feeling ashamed of their cultural heritage and home language and wishing to assimilate into the Canadian social and mainstream, then certainly, multicultural education is not at work. "No child should have to go through the painful dilemma of choosing between family and school and what inevitably becomes a choice between belonging and succeeding" (Nieto, 1992, p. xxv).

ESL Students' Cultural and Linguistic Assimilation

Fleras and Elliott (1996) referred to assimilation, as defined by Park (1950) and Gordon (1964), as a one-way process of absorption—either deliberate or unconscious, formal or informal—whereby the dominant sector imposes its culture, authority, values, and institutions on the subordinate sector (p. 9). Fleras and Elliott further commented that Canada's multicultural minorities occupy a different status from Canada's aboriginal or charter groups. Many from this multicultural sector have encountered formidable barriers in adapting to a country whose agenda caters mainly to the first and second forces (p. 277). As argued by Porter (1965), most of Canada's minority groups have had, at some time, entrance status. Some, but not all, have moved out of it (p. 64). Empirical

evidence suggests that members of the visible minorities have found endless challenges when trying to integrate into a country that has its own political agenda and socioeconomic infrastructure. It can be argued that some immigrant students blame their home culture and language and their status in Canada for their marginalization at school. Abalos (1993) pointed out that because a large number of ESL students come from backgrounds of economic poverty, they identify many of their family problems with poverty and/or racism. Some of these students have realized that the answer to their frustration is not to romanticize the inherited archetypal patterns, dramas, and ways of life (p. xxi).

Another factor that often leads ESL students to their linguistic assimilation is students' own pressure to learn the English language. Cummins (1981) remarked that the positive side of assimilation is that ESL students' urgent need to learn English leads to a rapid acquisition of English-language skills (p. 8). For the most part, ESL students' first-language retention has been seen as a barrier to integration. According to Nieto (1992), schools often make the direct link between the students' English assimilation and their economic and social mobility. In most cases, students who speak another language more fluently than English are viewed as handicapped (p. 153). Generally, it is assumed that ESL students' strong bonds with the home culture along with their first-language retention result in their low academic achievement. However, the danger of ESL students' linguistic assimilation is that it could bring about various kinds of family conflicts. Garcia (1994), citing Wong-Fillmore (1991), mentioned that serious disruptions of family relations may occur when young children learn English in school and lose the use of the language spoken at home (p. 50). Because the pace of acculturation or assimilation is more rapid for children than for their parents, ESL students become estranged from their cultural heritage and home language as they try to develop a sense of identity with the North American culture. Vega (1995), citing Snapoczic and Hernandez (1988), argued that the culture change may also be more chaotic and disorganizing for youth because they are attempting

to develop a coherent sense of identity by learning and integrating two sets of differing cultural expectations (p. 11). The consequence is that immigrant children are being pushed and pulled between cultures. They are expected to adopt cultural behaviors and values at school that often differ from those at home and create conflicts between parents and children. Fleras and Elliott (1996) stated that young people may feel cross-pressured. They may have one foot in the mainstream but feel that they do not have solid ground to stand on their own (p. 140).

This study does not attempt to discuss thoroughly the serious effects of students' linguistic and cultural assimilation or the benefits of ESL students' first-language and culture retention for them and their families. However, it could be argued that first-language and culture retention is not the source of ESL students' frustration and marginalization, which often results in high rates of school dropouts. Neither is cultural and linguistic assimilation the solution to ESL students' successful integration into the school system. To achieve educational mobility, children should not have to turn their backs on their cultural heritage and language to assimilate into the mainstream. The existing problem is rooted in the fact that the present educational system does not seem to be equipped to deal properly with the increasing diversity. By contrast, the current educational system seems to be an extension of the existing stratified social system. Fleras and Elliot (1996) concluded that, from daily routines to decision making, education is organized to facilitate cultural indoctrination and social control of students. These productive functions are accomplished in a direct manner by the selection of textbooks that reflect the mainstream values. The streaming of minority students into lower-level programs, as well as diminished teachers' expectations, restrict these students' access to higher education and useful employment (p. 374).

The Myth of Equality of Educational Opportunities

This part of this chapter explores themes concerning the inequality of educational opportunities for English as a Second Language students in Canada. It will focus specifically on the nature of educational inequality, how it is manifested, and what can be done about it. I will begin by contrasting the main ideas of two different approaches to educational equity in Canada. Although there is abundant literature around this issue, I will use the basic principle of the meritocratic theory as observed by Mazurek (1987) and discussed by critical educational theorists such as Apple and Weis (1983) and Fleras and Elliott (1996). This chapter examines the scope of educational inequality in terms of ESL students' exclusion and/or segregation from regular curricular and extracurricular activities or regular programs. Evidence further presented in the analysis of the findings of the research on inclusion of ESL students in mainstream classrooms and of related literature will demonstrate that equality of educational opportunities and ethnic mobility through educational attainment in Canada is a myth.

The meritocratic theory, from a liberal-democratic perspective, provides a frame of reference particularly for multicultural education. Mazurek (1987) stressed that, from a meritocratic point of view, Canada has been painted as a society where everyone starts life with an equal chance to develop innate talents, pursue economic opportunities, earn the amenities that society has to offer, and succeed to the limits that an individual's ability, energy, and motivation allow (p. 141). This rationale suggests that in practice, given certain levels of an individual's ability, energy, and motivation, all Canadian residents are entitled to equal access to education. Once individuals' innate talents have evolved through cognitive development, individuals have equal economic and social mobility. The meritocratic notion considers individuals' merits for education attainment. It is up to the individual to become industrious, successful, and prosperous in Canada. However, the meritocratic theory does not acknowledge schools as institutions implicated in the process of social reproduction. Fleras and Elliott (1996) remarked that the notion of social

reproduction puts constraints on multicultural education. Receptivity to diversity and change within the context of equality is doubly difficult in a milieu where assimilation and monoculturalism prevail (p. 375).

Fleras and Elliott (1996) maintained that French and English language in Canada stand in a privileged position as the official languages of political and public discourse by virtue of the Official Languages Act 1969 (p. 242). It is argued by some that linguistic diversity can be considered more of a burden than a threat to national unity. Because the Anglo-conformist model remains latent in most Canadian schools, ESL students continue disregarding their ethnic and language backgrounds to fit into the school system and society at large. Cummins (1981) commented that education has been regarded as a major means of Canadianizing "foreign" students. Given the strong emphasis on Anglo conformity in schools, it is not surprising that bilingualism has become a negative force in children's development. It has become a disease that not only interferes with Canadianization, but also causes confusion in children's thinking (p. 6).

Fleras and Elliott (1996) argued that through schooling, reproduction of the ideological and social order is realized without a great deal of public awareness or open fanfare. Nor are administrators or decision makers necessarily aware of the systemic bias inherent within the institution itself (p. 374). Thus, specific aspects of the collective culture are presented on a day-to-day basis through an ideological configuration of the interests of the society. Apple and Weis (1983) understood schools as important agencies for legitimization (p. 5). "They are part of a complex structure through which social groups are given legitimacy and through which social and cultural ideologies are built, recreated, and maintained" (p. 5). These authors further stated that through the school's hidden curriculum, students are tacitly taught norms, values, and dispositions simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years (p. 18). In this way, a picture is painted of Canada as an egalitarian society where everyone has a chance to be successful. As Apple and Weis

asserted, through a hidden curriculum schools tend to describe both their own internal workings and those of society as a whole as meritocratic and as inexorably moving toward a widespread social and economic justice (p. 5).

Inequality of Education

From a critical educational point of view, we need to understand schools as places that go beyond the stated purpose of seeking to maximize all students' potentials. In interpreting the dynamics of schooling more closely, it would be relevant to consider education within a larger context. Then we have to examine what kinds of students benefit from it. In going beyond a meritocratic analysis of the relationship between education and equality, one could go into more depth and analyze the organization of our current social system. Apple and Weis (1983) remarked that the real issue is why there is such a large concentration of women and members of minority groups within the working class and, more specifically, within particular fractions of that class (p. 12). Part of the answer to this question can be found in the internal dynamics that govern our current educational system: the equality and quality of education that, more specifically, ESL students are receiving. Wong-Fillmore (1986) stressed that it is not enough merely to give LEP children access to an education; there must also be a concern with the kind of education that they are receiving. LEP children in our schools obtain very little education; at most, English and some basic skills (p. 5). For the most part, ESL or transitional English classes have the tendency to be compensatory in nature. Most English survival lessons are aimed at providing ESL students with basic ESL skills.

Providing different educational experiences based on students' ability, gender, social class, and ethnicity leads to inequality of education and inevitable to segregation. Nieto (1992) mentioned one example of segregated schooling as those situations where students of color tend to be provided with curricula that are at a lower level than those that serve primarily White students (p. 24). Thus, students who are provided with a

curriculum that is at a lower level are taught at a lower level and are expected to function at a lower level as well. Brown (1986) acknowledged that various researchers—Leacock (1969), Brophy and Good (1974), Braun (1976), Cooper (1977), Terman (1979), and Good (1981)—have suggested that students for whom teachers hold low expectations for academic achievement are taught less effectively than those for whom teachers hold high expectations. In general, students who are not expected to make significant progress experience limited opportunities to engage actively in curricular activities. Teachers are less likely to plan for or direct instruction toward this group. These students, most of whom are minorities or ESL students, experience fewer teacher demands for academic performance and increasingly greater demands for conformance in terms of behavior (p. 32).

Tracking or Ability Grouping

Gamoran (1992) stated that ability grouping is one of the most common responses to the problem of providing for student differences. However, grouping has different effects in different circumstances. It typically leads to inequitable outcomes (p. 11). Apple and Weis (1983) also remarked that schools assist in the process of capital accumulation by providing some of the necessary conditions for re-creating an unequally responsive economy. They do this in part by internally sorting and selecting students by "talent," a process that, by integrating students into a credential market and a system of urban segregation, roughly reproduces a hierarchically organized labor force (p. 5). Through a "pull out" system, ESL students are placed in a segregated learning environment with students who have the same language challenges, where they are prepared as quickly as possible to enter the regular programs. It has been stipulated in Alberta Education's (1997) Policy 1.5.1 related to education programs and services that

> to facilitate the integration of the student into the regular school program at the earliest possible opportunity, Alberta Education will assist school boards in providing English as a second language programs to Alberta students who were

> born in Canada, but who are not fluent in English, and to those who have recently arrived in Canada and whose first language is not English. (n.p.)

As will be further explored in this study, ESL students are tested to demonstrate their need for English-language support. It is stipulated in some of the procedures in the Policy 1.5.1 (Alberta Education, 1997) that the procedures for "receiving, assessing, placing, monitoring and evaluating ESL students" (n.p.) shall be consistent with provincial policy and procedures. However, it could be argued that testing could have unequal implications for ESL students. Nieto (1992) noted that it is important to emphasize that tests have frequently been used as a basis for segregating and sorting students (p. 72). Once ESL students are labeled as such, they are able to qualify for a three-year funding cap. They are also ability tested and, accordingly, are placed in special programs where they get the extra-academic help required. However, as has been explored in this chapter, ESL students are not being provided with the quality of education that they need to compete on an equal footing with English native speakers for employment opportunities. Harklau (1994) commented that even though ESL students may take up to seven years to develop the level of language proficiency required to compete on an equal footing with native English speakers (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1982), they are likely to be mainstreamed long before then (p. 242).

Vocationalism and Schooling

There is a strong relationship between vocationalism and ethnicity. Jackson (1987) argued that vocational differentiation of students is one of the most straightforward ways in which the school is implicated in the production of social inequalities (p. 165). In examining occupation or vocation as a dimension of ethnic inequality, this researcher analyzed the role of schools in orienting individuals to particular vocational or occupational destinations. Jackson mentioned that through the process of course selection

in high school or any other factors that influence post-secondary education or employment, the school contributes to the social division of labor (p. 166).

This study will further explore how ESL students who are placed in "special" programs at the junior high school level are, intentionally or unintentionally, directed to high schools with specialized second-language instruction. For the most part, this type of school offers various vocational choices for students who, for different reasons (e.g., lack of English proficiency), do not qualify for regular or academic high school programs that lead them to academic high school graduation. According to the conventional description of a vocational program, it is one of the fastest routes to enter the labor market. Jackson (1987) argued that the relation of economic factors to ethnicity becomes visible in part through the vocational process (p. 167). Because some ESL students continue to be misled to certain "occupational aspirations," they continue to be discouraged from pursuing academic or university education. Jackson further commented that the long-term implications of these differentiating processes, as well as the short-term practical purposes, are obscured by the existence of a positive regime of administrative action. This action can be seen to provide for the "needs" of ethnic students by providing ESL and transitional classes, multicultural and new-Canadian programs, heritage language programs, ethnic survival programs, community liaison committees, and the like. These concepts and categories are the tools of an administrative apparatus that makes students' lives manageable for the purposes of the school, without regard for how well they address the students' own experiences of ethnic relations (p. 181).

ESL Dropout

Mazurek (1987) mentioned that, from a meritocratic point of view, the major political function of the state is to create and maintain the social conditions that allow genuinely free and open avenues for success that must be equally available to all citizens (p. 142). Certainly, a state that provides equality of opportunities for success would

provide an educational system that effectively meets the various needs of its students. Studies conducted by Roessingh and Watt (1994) demonstrate that ESL students appeared to drop out of high school at two or three times the rate of their Canadian counterparts in Alberta (p. 291). According to these authors, a *dropout* is broadly defined as "anyone who did not complete the academic requirements for high school graduation" (p. 285). For the purposes of Roessingh and Watt's study, a dropout is defined as all Grade 10 to 12 ESL registrants who withdrew from school without having fulfilled the requirements for graduation from high school (pp. 285-286). The meritocratic theory does not acknowledge that the Canadian educational system does not deal properly with the imminent increasing diversity of most high schools. Roessingh and Watt also revealed that the ESL dropout rate itself varied dramatically according to the students' English-language proficiency at entry to high school. Students who started high school with a beginner level of English proficiency suffered a 95.5 % dropout rate. Those few exceptional students who started high school with an advanced ability in English had only a 50% chance of completing the high school diploma (p. 291).

The background to Alberta Education (1997) Policy 1.5.1 related to education programs and services states that

> people from a variety of cultures have worked together to develop our province and our country. Our future as well will be built by young Albertans who come from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
>
> These young Albertans, newly arrived in Canada and children of Alberta residents who are not fluent in English, shall be provided with programs that are designed to equip them with the necessary language skills and understanding of the Canadian way of life, so that they may participate fully in our education system and become productive and contributing members of Albertan and Canadian society. (n.p.)

I will rely on Roessingh and Watt's (1994) data to demonstrate that ESL students are not provided with the quality of education or programs that equips them to participate effectively in the Alberta educational system. Roessingh and Watt observed that there are three distinct categories of ESL dropouts, which relate partly to the quality of school that ESL students experience. These categories are *dropout*, *fall-out*, and *push-out* (p. 293).

According to these researchers, a number of reasons for dropping out were documented in the students' guidance files. The most notable was the perception of impending failure and lack of interest and care on the part of their teachers. On the other hand, students who were categorized as fall-outs were recognized as students who were not "held in" by the educational system and who left prior to any recordable progress. Generally, these students were at the beginner level and disappeared from the school in the first and second semester. Moreover, fall-out was not an active decision; rather, it appeared to be the side effect of insufficient personal and educational support. Finally, push-out refers to the removal of support services from students who still required them and/or were willing to continue with their program, but for administrative reasons (funding caps) were either not identified or not eligible (as ESL students). Typically, push-out also involves the high school attendance age cap of 19 in Grade 12, which was established according to the educational norms of students who speak English as a first language (p. 294).

These statistics could demonstrate that the linguistic and academic needs of ESL students remain unaddressed and unmet in Alberta schools. It can be argued that ESL students can benefit from a meritocratic society by overcoming English-language challenges at a very fast pace and by overcoming social and psychological barriers as fast as possible to fit into the society. For the most part, the lower socioeconomic status of most foreign students upon their arrival in the "promised land" is one of the most serious challenges to overcome to enjoy the advantages of a meritocratic society.

Barriers to Accessing Education

Porter (1965) remarked that there are barriers to equal educational opportunities, both social and psychological (p. 168). In Porter's view, the inequality of income and wealth distribution among Canadian residents is a social barrier to education. "Education costs money and regardless how free it may be, lower income families tend to take their children out of school at earlier age and put them to work" (p. 168). This statement could

be additionally supported by studies conducted in Edmonton through the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (Seifeddine, 1994). These studies revealed that unequal income distribution among minority groups in Alberta forced ESL students to drop out in order to work and help to support their family and is one of the strongest reasons for their low academic achievement in Alberta schools. According to Seifeddine, only 38% of African and Latin Americans get A's and B's compared to 78% of Eastern Europeans who get the same marks in Catholic and public schools across the city (p. 14). For the most part, African and Latin Americans belong to one of the lowest socioeconomic groups in Canada. Fleras and Elliott (1996) mentioned that a Statistics Canada review for February 1989 revealed that the average incomes of Latin, Central, and South American in 1986 were among the lowest of minority groups' incomes in Canada (p. 105). Thus, it could be assumed that the meritocratic theory fails to recognize Porter's conception of social barriers to equal education opportunities manifested in society at large.

Barriers to Participating in Extracurricular Activities

For various reasons ranging from economic restraints to family obligations and conflicts with schedules, ESL students remain excluded from participating in extracurricular activities at school. Nieto (1992) remarked that although extracurricular activities are presumably open to all, they are in effect restricted to students most able to afford them. Some extracurricular activities take place after school hours, and because students are not provided with transportation, extracurricular activities are available only to those students who can get home on their own; other students who work after school are also unable to take part in these activities as well (p. 255). For the most part, ESL students cannot afford them. They often come from large families and have family obligations such as babysitting their younger siblings while their parents work. I will not explore in depth why most ESL students' parents work at night. However, according to empirical evidence, most immigrant parents qualify only for janitorial work in Canada,

partially because of English-language barriers, but mainly because of other systemic problems. Porter (1965) commented that it is undoubtedly true that when ethnic groups are closely linked to their cultural milieu, they are encouraged in certain kinds of occupational choices and discouraged from others. In this way, ethnic segregation becomes an important factor in the link between ethnicity and occupations (p. 74). No matter the socioeconomic reasons for ESL students remaining excluded from participating in extracurricular activities at school, exclusion must be understood in terms of equal access or equal educational opportunities. Nieto (1992) suggested that intentional or unintentional exclusion of ESL students from extracurricular activities creates a problem of equal access that will result in the continuation of segregated and restricted school activities (p. 255).

Mazurek (1987) commented that wealth, gender, race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation must not hinder any citizen in pursuit of his or her personal ambitions and social goals (p. 142). However, his point of view contrasts with the evidence presented here. The high rates of ESL students' dropout as well as other barriers to educational opportunities cannot and must not be ignored. These high dropout rates could serve to demonstrate that equality of educational opportunities in Canada is a myth. There is a strong relationship between ethnics' schooling and the re-creation of social inequality. In fact, there are socioeconomic barriers to ESL students pursuit of further education in Canada—more specifically, university education—which could provide them with upper mobility and a higher socioeconomic status. Addressing the needs of ESL students will require broader, more effective, and more consistent educational policies and action plans that prevent them from dropping out of the school system. Jackson (1987) concluded that a shift from exclusive focus on language and cultural heritage as the root of ethnic inequality should be made to a broader focus on the social relations of class as the critical social dynamic on which inequality depends (p. 182). As the demographic ESL student population is increasing, we all must understand that ESL students need to be provided with effective

education so that they can truly become productive and contributing members of Albertan and Canadian society. For that matter, ESL students need not only a more effective support and educational system, but also equal treatment so that they can be equally and successfully included in mainstream classrooms. I feel that inclusive education could be a potential alternative that could contribute to ESL students' successful academic and cultural integration into the school and Canadian society at large. Sapon-Shevin (1992) remarked that inclusion represents a commitment to creating school and classrooms in which all children, regardless of individual educational needs or disabilities, are educated together. Inclusive classrooms are an attempt to honor and respond to the various needs that students bring to the classroom (p. 39).

Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII will be devoted to promoting a more inclusive environment for ESL students in regular classrooms. As Sapon-Shevin (1992) stated, how well any child does is a function of many variables, including the nature of the curriculum, the child's self-concept, the flexibility and support of those who surround the child, and the child's interest in the task (p. 40). "Therefore, if conditions were right, we all could do better!" (p. 40).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the ethnographic methods used in this research study. Wolcott (1988) pointed out that *ethnography* means, literally, a picture of the "way of life" of some identifiable groups in any time and place (p. 188). The identifiable group in my research was some Grade 7 and 8 ESL students in a Catholic junior high school. The target group was observed, interviewed, and studied from April 1997 to June 1997. The ethnographic techniques used for the data collection during my field research were participant observation and interviews. These inquiry methods corresponded with what Spindler and Spindler (1987) attributed to the standards of a good ethnography. They elaborated on this, that the view of the reality of any social situation is perceived through inferences from contextualized, prolonged, and repetitive observations and through various forms of ethnographic inquiry including interviews (p. 19). In order to gain an understanding of how the data collection meets the standards of a good ethnographic research study, it is important to acknowledge that I was immersed in the social situation for three months. This allowed me to understand the "other" from an insider point of view. During this time, the view of the reality of mainstreamed ESL students was perceived through consistent, repetitive, and contextualized observations as well as participants' insights and opinions on ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. More specifically, data collected from participant observation was constantly related to participants' formal or informal comments. Spindler and Spindler stated that the researcher observes, begins to formulate questions, asks questions, receives answers, observes some more with perceptions sharpened by new cultural knowledge, and refines questions; and, as the cycle continues, there is a constant interaction between observation and interviews (p. 21). An outline of the data analysis and

procedures are presented here. The following chapters reveal the findings of this research study.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research was used in an attempt to explore the nature of the problems, issues, and concerns arising from mainstreaming ESL students into regular classrooms. The research methodology used in this study was descriptive and interpretatively oriented rather than hypothesis testing in nature. Wolcott (1988) remarked that by selecting a case to illustrate ethnographic research in education, we are better able to dramatize how description and interpretation are the core of the ethnographic enterprise (p. 217). Qualitative research was appealing to me for various reasons: Peshkin (1993) claimed that many types of good results are the fruits of qualitative research (p. 28). Jaeger (1988) also alluded to cases where an ethnographic approach might be considered in conducting research. It is relatively inexpensive. Additionally, because *virtually any setting has ethnographic potential,* then any educational setting provides an opportunity to learn about schools. Furthermore, conducting ethnographic research provides an opportunity to demonstrate to educational researchers what this approach can accomplish and how it complements other approaches in understanding schools (p. 214). The qualitative methods used in this study were aimed at providing an insight into the realities that some ESL students faced in regular classrooms. By understanding how some schools handle the ESL student population, I attempted to explore various avenues as to how to make the learning environment effective for them. Thus, using sequential processes from problem identification to conclusions, the research material collected, thematically analyzed, and presented in this study was intended to produce some generalization as to how ESL students could be better included in regular academic and nonacademic activities at school.

The Setting

The setting of the present study was Greenview (a pseudonym) a Catholic, junior high school located in Edmonton, Alberta. The school was chosen for the ethnic and social diversity characteristic of its physical location.

The target group was Grade 7 and 8 mainstreamed ESL students. The subject areas were mainly social studies and language arts and occasionally Grade 8 science and physical education classes. Social studies and English classes were selected because these two subject areas are heavily reliant on English-language proficiency. Therefore, students are required to comprehend abstract language as opposed to mathematics, for instance, where there is less language and more numerical involvement.

Data Sources

A great portion of the data gathered was through participant observation. In order to get a feeling of the social situation being study, I became part of the scene and did my field work by observing people's behaviors, interactions, classroom activities, physical characteristics, and so on. Spradley (1980) contended that the participant-observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation (p. 54). Nevertheless, my role as observant was not the role of a "spy"; rather, it was the role of a participant who was engaged in the social context, observed the interactive patterns, and noted their impact on students.

Wolcott (1988) mentioned that the ideal time for an ethnographer to remain in the field is about a year (p. 190). However, my familiarity with the language, the social situation, and the teaching profession did not require me to spend that much time. Moreover, I found through my field research that teachers were either becoming more accustomed to seeing me as a member of their classrooms or were appearing tired of being observed. In order to avoid monotony, I decided to observe a full cycle of activities. The

dynamics of social studies, English, and occasionally science and physical education classes were observed for approximately three months. As well during this time, ESL students were followed for about two full school days per week. ESL students' interactions with their mainstream peers and teachers were considered relevant for this research study. It was also very valuable to observe ESL students' overall participation in curricular and extracurricular activities.

Participant observation was not a single approach for data gathering. Based on Spindler and Spindler's (1987) claim that there is a constant interaction between observation and interview (p. 20), my field research also involved informal interviews and one-on-one, tape-recorded interviews. Spindler and Spindler mentioned that the ethnographer must be able to ask questions about the participants' behavior (p. 20). The formal interviews were conducted during the last two weeks of my research study. I sought to gain an insight and understanding into how ESL students could be better included into regular classrooms. By using the fundamentals of ethnographic interviewing described by Spradley (1979). Participants' insights and opinions concerning ESL students' experiences and issues related to their normal school lives were crucial for this research study. Accordingly, seven ESL students, one of the school facilitators, two language arts teachers, two social studies teachers, and a science teacher, along with a school administrator, were interviewed in depth. Spindler and Spindler advised that, because the informant is the person with the emic cultural knowledge, the interview must be carried out to promote the unfolding of the emic cultural knowledge in its most natural form (p. 19). Participants' emic perspectives involved my etic perspective as well. As an outsider, I would further provide a generalized point of view on the human behaviors involved in this study. As a researcher, I would contextualize participants' perceptions into an educational framework to inform teaching practitioners of the issues concerning the inclusion of ESL students into mainstream classrooms.

Additionally, to ensure the accuracy of the data, this study was well researched and referenced. I conducted a literature review on inclusion, mainstreaming, and ESL students' schooling conditions in North America to ensure that theoretical as well as practice knowledge was integrated into the study.

Data Analysis

Spindler and Spindler (1987) pointed out that the ultimate purpose of ethnography is to provide a reliable source of material for analysis (p. 22). The data gathered from participant observation were recorded in handwriting. I kept a detailed record of both objective observations and subjective feelings. Spindler and Spindler cautioned that behavior in a situation must be explained from the participants' point of view, and that both the behavior and explanation must be recorded as carefully and systematically as possible, using whatever aids are expedient, such as note taking, tape recorders, and cameras (p. 20). The data were organized according to subject areas, corresponding teachers, and dates. The data were sorted, selected, and typed in point form to draw out some common themes that emerged. Once recurring situations were found, they were coded and classified according to themes. "Themes not only recur again and again throughout different parts of the culture; they also connect different subsystems of culture" (Spradley, 1979, p. 189).

Upon completion of the teachers' interviews, they were fully transcribed. ESL students' interviews were not audible. The teachers', the school facilitator's, and the school administrator's interviews were sent to the participants to read. They could make any necessary changes, additions, deletions, or corrections to ensure accuracy.

The transcriptions of the interviews were read numerous times to discover emerging themes. As I read every interview in depth, it became evident that some themes were recurring. Recurring themes were coded and copied.

Peshkin (1993) claimed that the proof of research conducted by whatever means resides in the pudding of its outcomes (p. 23). This study was intended to explore the various factors that could contribute to making the learning environment more inclusive for ESL students. Peshkin (1993) listed different types of outcomes from qualitative research: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation (p. 24). Based on data gathered in a social context in which human behaviors and interactions were observed and examined closely, this study included a description of participants, their interactions, the physical setting, and some classroom situations.

According to Peshkin (1993) the category of interpretative analysis contains subcategories of good research outcomes. Some of those subcategories are explaining and creating generalizations, developing new concepts, providing insights, identifying problems, and so on. Within the category of interpretation, my research findings would identify the problem of mainstreaming ESL students. By providing teachers' and scholars' insights into the research question, generalizations resulted as the final product. Spindler and Spindler (1987) remarked that analysis is directed toward goals that are usually shaped by theoretical and practical concerns that require systematic steps to move from data to generalizations (p. 31). The research findings will be presented in the following four chapters. To ensure objectivity, the findings will be presented through comments that are either descriptive or interpretative and will be compared with the findings in the literature.

Ethical Considerations

This research study involved the direct participation of 13 ESL students, five teachers, the school facilitator, and the school administrator. Because the ESL students were under 18 years of age, their comments remained confidential to ensure that they were protected from retribution from authority figures.

The school administration was provided with a copy of my thesis proposal. Additionally, all participants in this study were provided with a letter that described the purpose of my study as well as a letter specifically informing them of their voluntary participation in this research study. Consequently, the participants, including students, parents, and/or guardians, were informed in writing, prior to their participation, of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. When a child expressed unwillingness to participate in the study, he or she was verbally reassured that information concerning his or her involvement was deleted.

All participants were informed in writing of their right to remain anonymous. The data collected by means of interviews as well as data gathered through participant observation remained safeguarded. All participants were free to reject any data-gathering devices. Real names were kept confidential; my informants' privacy remained protected by the use of pseudonyms. The school's name remained unidentified as well. The participants had an opportunity to respond to the first draft. Any requests for editing of information were honored.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter and the following three chapters is to present the data gathered during my field research conducted at Greenview School (a pseudonym), a Catholic junior high school in Edmonton. Teachers' insights, perspectives and experiences related to their jobs as educators of ESL students in regular classrooms will be presented in this chapter and the next two chapters. Field notes were taken from consistent observations as well as teachers' comments and answers to my questions related to ESL students' integration into the school system to provide a greater understanding of the implications of accommodating ESL students into mainstream classrooms.

To ensure objectivity, my comments will be expanded on or supported by participants' insights and opinions or by direct quotations. In some other instances, some of the observations will be paraphrased. Additionally, the findings will include researchers' insights into the focus questions and themes concerning ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. The research findings will be discussed as follows: description of the school, perceptions of participants involved in the study, contributing factors to ESL students' inclusion, inclusive teaching practices for ESL students, and building a support network for ESL students.

Description of the School

The changing nature of the population in most Canadian schools is remarkable. Schools in Alberta are indicative of an ethnic population boom. ESL students want to enjoy equal rights to education. This right can either be recognized by a school's personnel or denied through hidden policies or internal dynamics.

In order to have a clear understanding of the issues to be explored in this chapter, it is relevant to begin by describing the school in which this research was conducted. This

study took place at Greenview, a Catholic junior high school located in Edmonton. The school was founded in 1981. Since then, it has been characterized by the great ethnic diversity typical of any urban school located in this neighborhood. In the school year 1996-1997 the school population was about 610 students, and the ESL population was 67 students.

The school principal, Mr. Kinneard (a pseudonym), and some of t he teachers described the school setting and its dynamics. According to Mr. Kinneard, the geographical location was very multicultural. He pointed out that the school held a large number of immigrant students compared to schools located in other areas in Edmonton. Greenview's location appeared to be strongly related to the school's overall positive attitude towards ESL students, as indicated in this excerpt:

> We have 65 to 70 ESL students this year, but when you have that many children, what choices do we have? You'd better work with them in the classroom. So the nature of the community dictates that reaction. The history of the school—I go back seventeen years—it started off with an inclusive attitude. It was decided that the school system would not have exclusive classrooms. So ESL children automatically fit into the inclusive environment.

Greg, one of the science teachers, also referred to the relationship between the school location and its inherent inclusive environment. He remarked that the school's location had a tremendous impact on students' and teachers' attitudes of acceptance towards each other. Greg further asserted:

> Greenview has a cultural mix that is quite extraordinary, and when a teacher comes into this area from a school that is predominantly one ethnic background, when they come in here and they see the names ranging from John to Jose, from Abraham to Juan, they say, "My God!" There is no predominant ethnic group in this school. It is a complete mix, and it is so extreme that we have next to no issues of race or racism in any negative concept. ESL is a natural part. When a student comes into this school and they don't speak English, well, that is normal, because he is the tenth child who comes in and doesn't speak English, and the children and the teachers just welcome him and try to make his stay as comfortable as possible.

Greg's remarks confirmed Mr. Kinneard's comments about how students with a dark complexion did not stand out in his school because they were part of the culture of

the school community. Mr. Kinneard further noted: "You might go to another school, and the Black boy down the hall, he would stand out; that boy would not stand out here."

Looking back at Greenview's history and considering that it was located in one of the fastest growing multicultural communities in Edmonton, Ellen (a pseudonym), one of the school facilitators, described how inclusion developed. Inclusion was not always part of the school district policy. In the past the school board had "district programs" or segregated programs designed to accommodate special-needs children. Students with various learning challenges were not in the regular classroom. In Ellen's words, "Special-needs children may have been sent to a district program, bused from their area or town to another school." About 10 years ago things began to change when the school board started to integrate students rather than segregating them into special programs. Ellen's comments on the school board's changes in its segregation philosophy suggested that it was based on the assumption that children do not need to be removed from their neighborhood school and relocated. Instead, they should remain in their home schools where they are comfortable, they recognize people from their neighborhood, or they are able to be with their siblings. Ellen concluded:

> When schools adopted an inclusive policy, that meant no more districts, no more sending children away, let them stay with us, let's put the support in the schools, put support in the classrooms where, those children can be part of the regular classes.

The imminent diversification in schools and the need to accommodate these students in regular classrooms encouraged Greenview to become one of the first schools to adopt the philosophy of inclusion. In this regard Ellen said:

> Everyone has the right to be with us, and they have the right to be with other children of different abilities and different backgrounds, so ESL children were and have been part of our inclusive setting. However, students who come to our school are welcome to go to a school that has a specialized ESL program. It is a free option.

Another important characteristic of Greenview School was its Catholic affiliation. Some teachers suggested that religion became one of the most important connecting factors among students in general, particularly across different cultures. Ellen commented:

> Because we are a Catholic school, we tend to get ESL students who are Catholic. So there is no religion problem here. If you grow up in another school system, where children may have friends, let's say Muslim, and they are not supposed to have Christian friends, maybe that is a major problem; whereas most of the children that come to us are Catholic, so our religion is a connecting factor.

Greenview School consisted of approximately 48 staff members. According to some of the teachers, most of the staff had been at the school for a long time, which created a cohesive environment among teachers that in turn was extended towards the student community. Cynthia, one of the veteran school teachers, confirmed:

> A lot of the staff have been here for a long time. So if you have a sad face or you have a celebration, it is basically your friends celebrating, and I think that happens to the children too. Some of these children I've known since Grade Two or Three. It makes a big difference!

In addition, some of the teachers interviewed agreed that, traditionally, Greenview staff had been very supportive of all children, regardless of the challenges some of them may have faced. James, a social studies teacher, commented on the positive attitude toward students:

> The attitude here has been one of accepting, doing little things for the children. As a consequence, students feel comfortable, happy, and secure about being at this school. I think that they have done the same thing with the staff. If the staff feel that they are wanted, then they feel important. That is one of the things that have always come out, and because of that, it is this attitude.

The data gathered through participant observation reveal that the inclusive atmosphere was maintained at the classroom level as well. In fact, Greenview had a positive classroom ambiance for ESL students. According to Igoa (1995), regardless of policies, philosophies, theories, and methodologies, the success or failure of a child and his or her experiences at school depends on what happens in that child's classroom, what kind of environment the teacher is able to provide, and how well the teacher is able to investigate and attend to the particular needs of that child (p. 9).

In summary, Greenview School's cohesive environment appeared to be a reflection of an inclusive philosophy that developed over time. It was exercised at both staff and student levels. Teachers' attitudes and natural, friendly dispositions appeared to be linked to fairly successful integration of ESL students into Greenview School. However, I feel that this was not the result of the teachers' unilateral commitment; they required administrative support to integrate these students.

Perceptions of Participants Involved in the Study

Perceptions of the School Principal

> The school administrator must recognize his or her responsibility to set the tone of the school and to ensure that decisions are made, challenges are met, and interactions and processes are supported that are consistent with the school's philosophy. (Stainback & Stainback, 1996, p. 51)

Leadership that strengthens appreciation for and understanding of cultural diversity encourages mainstream teachers and students to honor and accept diversity as part of the nature of our contemporary world. Honoring and accepting cultural diversity implies understanding that cultures are unique. Understanding cultural diversity at school means recognizing ESL children as entities in their own social and cultural milieu. According to Morris (1994), children do not come to the classrooms as "empty vessels" but come with internalized standards of communication, interaction, language use, and behaviors from their home environments. These students experience cultural conflict because their accustomed methods of learning and communicating will probably not match the mainstream standards (p. 72).

By being culturally aware, the school principal makes sure that there is support for ESL students as well as for teachers who are faced with cultural diversification in regular classrooms. As he or she is in the best position to set the tone for accepted behavior, a positive role model and a supportive school administrator are the strongest resources for a school to create an inclusive atmosphere for ESL students. Moreover, if the school

administration recognizes the importance to Canadian society of successful integration of ESL students, they will attend to their English-language needs. Mr. Kinneard remarked that Greenview provided ESL students with the extra academic support required with "an effective inclusive-ed. team":

> We have a fairly large inclusive-ed. team for the school size. We basically have three full-time teachers working in this one area. Most schools this size probably would have two at the most, maybe less. The team is very dedicated to their task.

Ellen, one of the members of this inclusive-ed. team, suggested that one of the best ways to ensure successful integration of ESL students was as follows:

> I always make sure that there is support in place, not only for the student in the classroom, but for the teachers. At one time we had more support in place; now because of the cutbacks, we have less support staff. If teachers are going to have these children in the classrooms, they need to have the support. I mean resources, a person like myself to help, maybe even planning a program or helping in adjusting the program. If there is support in place, everything should be successful. With more support there is more success.

Greenview School has had three principals. Mr. Kinneard had been in the school only since 1996. Generally, most teachers reported positive feedback from previous and present school administrators. Alluding to the three school administrators' philosophy, Ellen commented that they were similar in accepting and enhancing cultural diversification:

> At Greenview we have been very lucky. This school has been blessed with wonderful principals, and we are Catholic people, and because of that we are human and we always try to help and practice what we see from her or from him [the school principal].

The Greenview administration, particularly the school principal, were very caring and accepting of linguistically diverse children as vital members of the regular classroom. Overall, they seemed to be concerned with all students' safety and security in their learning environment. As the principal indicated:

> The ESL students must be willing to be risk takers, and you can't be a risk taker unless you are safe and secure. You can't speak out if you think that you are going to be humiliated because you have a "funny" accent.

Mr. Kinneard's comments revealed his positive attitude towards students in general and ESL students in particular. Being able to observe some of the school's daily

routines allowed me to perceive that he interacted well with both students and teachers. As a participant observer, I had the opportunity to be part of the staff meetings; I corroborated that relationships of mutual cooperation and respect among teachers and between teachers and the administration existed. In fact, the extension of those harmonious relationships to the student community may have been the basis for ESL students' feelings of acceptance and comfort at school. Nicholas, one of the new ESL students to Canada, replied that what he liked the most about the school was the staff, because they were very helpful, and the Catholic nature of the school.

Teachers' Perceptions of ESL Students

I observed 13 ESL students, 4 girls and 9 boys in Grades 7 and 8, during their daily routines at Greenview School. Their pseudonyms are as follows: Angela, Sandra, Julia, Irene, Greg, Richard, Roberto, John, Nicholas, Maurice, Joseph, Freddy, and Manuel. Their school-entry date ranged from 1994 to 1996. Their mother tongues were Filipino, Spanish, and Polish.

Observations of and individual interviews with some of the teachers involved in this study revealed that they understood an ESL student as someone whose first language was not English, who could not speak English very well, and who felt more confident communicating in his or her first language. An ESL student, in some teachers' opinion, was someone who needed extra work with learning English. As Mr. Kinneard said:

> ESL children are those students who require learning assistance in their language; not in their intellect, but just in their language. Now, that could be an immigrant child, it could be a Canadian-born child of an immigrant family, it could be a Native child for that matter, it could be a child from Quebec, who has English as a second language.

One of the teachers referred to an ESL student as "just another student who came to Canada with a new language." However, other teachers' understandings suggested that an ESL student was not "another student," but a learner who struggled academically. According to some of their perceptions, students who were adjusting well academically

and linguistically regardless of their length of time in the school were not ESL students. For instance, Norah stated: "Some of the students that you [Carmen Bird] picked out as ESL, I had no idea that they were ESL students because they write and speak well, and so they are doing well." Previous to this comment, Norah had observed: "I don't think that Richard is an ESL student. He does well; he is getting eighties and nineties."

In understanding Norah's comments, one could see that at Greenview the cultural background and particularly the non-Caucasian physical characteristics of most ESL students were not barriers to their cultural integration into the school. It could be argued that as long as mainstreamed ESL students can speak English well, they are viewed in the same way as Canadian-born students. However, Norah's comments suggested that there was an underlying stigma attached to being an ESL student and having academic problems or not doing well at school. This message was also implicit in some of James' remarks: "Richard is not an ESL student because he doesn't have any problems and speaks English very well, while Irene and Roberto do have many problems."

Most teachers agreed that, generally, ESL students who were new to the school were shy and withdrawn; they had to be prompted because they did not volunteer their needs or personal opinions. Consequently, they were perceived as passive receivers of information. The new school environment, in some of the teachers' opinions, made them fearful of taking risks. James stressed: "They are very quiet and introverted; they prefer to be ignored rather than bring attention to themselves." In addition to these teachers' perceptions of ESL students, Ellen commented that, generally, ESL students were less assertive than mainstream students. As well, Ellen noted: "I think that by nature, these ESL children are observers and they are thinkers and listeners, because they want to learn and they don't want to be excessively different."

The ESL students observed presented different personality characteristics. Seven students appeared to be more outgoing and extroverted than the other six in class and outside the classroom setting. My data reveal that those extroverted students seemed to be

adjusting better to Greenview School. To a certain degree, the ESL students' attitude was a key factor in their process of adaptation to the new school environment. James, one of the school's teachers, confirmed:

> If you have the right attitude, then you are going to do it. If you don't and you are shy or timid, then it takes a lot longer. I have seen some children who go through a whole year and do not get anywhere, and you really get frustrated because they aren't even picking up the basic words.

ESL students' school-entry date was not strongly associated with the way they were integrating culturally into the school. I found that some of the teachers' comments regarding ESL students' attitudes of seclusion because they were new to the school were not a dominant factor. The data collected from participant observation reveal that some ESL students who arrived at Greenview during the school year 1995-1996 were very outspoken and relating well to both ESL students and mainstream students. As a consequence, they appeared to be integrating well into the school. On the other hand, some of the ESL students who arrived during the school year 1993-1994 appeared to be very quiet in class. They did not seem to participate in academic activities. However, they seemed to be relating fairly well to mainstream students and to other ESL students. Nicholas, a Grade 7 student who arrived at Greenview in 1996, reported that most of his friends at school were Canadian and that he felt that he was well accepted at school.

Based on personal communications with Ellen, one of the school facilitators, I concluded that ESL students were officially defined by the school's internal policies as those Canadian-born students who were placed at CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) Level 1 or 2 because they required additional English-language assistance. An ESL student was also an immigrant student who did not have any English experience and qualified at CALP Level 1 or 2. The Woodcock-Munoz, a language survey (1996-1997), was used to determine the CALP Levels. Greenview School's policies on ESL students' language testing defined the Woodcock-Munoz as "a Language Survey specifically designed to determine the cutoff points for the five levels of CALP." In summary, an ESL

student appeared to be any Canadian-born or immigrant child who demonstrated to the school in the Woodcock-Munoz language survey that measures the five CALP levels that he or she had English-language challenges.

Perceptions of Mainstream Students

Mainstream students can play a remarkable role in contributing to ESL students' learning and their integration into the regular classroom environment. They can be the main helpers in engaging their ESL peers in communication, in academic and nonacademic tasks, and with the teachers.

Mainstream students were highly important participants in this project. The underlying assumption was that because they belonged to the dominant culture, they were in a power-control relationship with ESL students. My findings reveal, however, that they were not concerned by their Canadian status in the school setting. Quite the opposite; most exhibited a friendly, positive attitude towards ESL students. Cynthia, one of the language arts teachers, confirmed: "There are some students that are very kind and gentle and are very accepting and are very happy to work with ESL students in the classroom."

The mainstream students involved in this study can be described as Canadian-born children of immigrant parents or Canadian-born children of Canadian parents. For the most part, mainstream students in this school were not predominately White. A large number of them had a dark complexion. This could have contributed to the fact that some ESL students were mistaken for mainstream students and vice versa.

Observing classroom dynamics, I noted that mainstream students exhibited a positive attitude towards each other as well as towards their ESL peers. Generally, this attitude was strongly encouraged by most teachers. Greg commented:

> Our students here care about each other; they are kind, in general. This is a junior high school, so the other side is always there. Being a negative role model does not make you popular here. One of our students started being that way at the beginning of the school year. Certainly, right away, he realized that he was not getting any positive attention for that at all, not even from his friends.

During most classes observed, in a number of curricular activities students were involved in cooperative learning dynamics. My observations reveal that when doing group work, mainstream students worked willing with their ESL peers and engaged them in spontaneous conversations. Additionally, I perceived that most of the mainstream students eagerly chose to work with their ESL classmates in different academic activities. For the most part, the mainstream students were caring and were very accepting of ESL students' cultural differences. Bruce, a social studies teacher, reaffirmed my observations: "I think that, generally speaking, in this school we have a number of different cultures already. The students seem to have a great deal of tolerance and acceptance for one another."

I did not observe any discrimination by mainstream students towards the ESL students' culture or language. My observations evidenced friendly interactions such as the one between a Canadian-born girl, Justine, and an ESL student, Angela. More specifically, Justine attempted to speak in the ESL students' first language: *"No mula, mi amor,"* said Justine to Angela. Angela corrected Justine's Spanish mispronunciation. It appeared to me that Justine had requested Angela to do so.

Finally, it seemed to me that the class enjoyed the antics of ESL students. Noisy, off-task behavior between two ESL students, Richard and Roberto, disturbed Garret (a mainstream student). Garret complained to them: "Please, I am trying to think." Roberto's reply, "Don't hurt yourself," caused the whole group to laugh. I did not interpret this as an ESL student's disruptive behavior, but as an indication of the overall acceptance of ESL students by the class. This incident particularly indicated that ESL students were culturally integrated into the group. Likewise, I realized that some ESL students' sense of humor in class caused positive reactions among students. Additionally, ESL students interviewed commented that they socialized with Canadian-born students as often as they did with their ESL peers. Roberto, an ESL student, mentioned that he had five close friends at school; two of them were ESL, and the other three were "Canadian."

Mainstream students' friendliness towards ESL students was, for the most part, a response to most teachers' encouragement of tolerance and acceptance of one another. Ellen noted:

> We don't let racism happen. Let's say that a child picks on another child because of culture or color. That has zero tolerance; the child will be suspended. You cannot do that. That is infringing on someone's rights. By having that philosophy with the children, then they know we are equal and we are all vital parts of our society.

In summary, as teachers fostered a welcoming classroom attitude towards ESL students, mainstream students became more accommodating, and ESL students felt more comfortable because they felt that they were being accepted as part of the regular classroom dynamics.

My Perceptions of the School's Teachers

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1995) remarked that teachers are the most powerful influence on students' behavior and learning. Their attitudes, expectations, behaviors, and actions strongly affect students. They project and carry out the school's and their own goals for the students (p. 159). Five teachers, one of the school facilitators, and the school principal participated in this study. Cynthia was a Grade 8 language arts teacher with an Italian background. Norah was a Grade 7 language arts teacher who had been in the school for three years. James was a veteran teacher who teaches Grade 7 social studies; he was also in charge of the computer room. Bruce was a new teacher to the school who taught Grade 8 social studies. Greg, the science and physical education teacher, had been in the school for about five years. Ellen, one of the school facilitators, was in charge of providing aid to special-needs and ESL children. She was not formally trained as an ESL teacher. Nevertheless, she had had rich and lengthy experiences working with ESL students for almost eight years. Finally, Michael Kinneard, the school principal, had been in charge of the school administration for a year.

Mr. Kinneard was my initial contact with Greenview School. He introduced me to one of the school facilitators, Ellen. She became my main source of information and assistance. She initiated my interaction with the participant teachers and provided me with the opportunity to observe consistently the school dynamics for about three months. My observations, isolated ESL students' comments, and interviews with teachers helped me to get to know the Greenview teachers. Most teachers involved in this project displayed a very welcoming, accommodating, and supportive attitude toward students. The majority of them demonstrated acceptance, tolerance, respect, and appreciation for others and, most importantly for culturally diverse children. Cynthia, one of the school's teachers, stated:

> I always expect respect for one another, not only them to me, but also me to them. Respect for the classroom, whether you are white, brown, black or whatever. I come from an Italian background, my husband is from Uganda. So, I expect respect for differences and everyone is very important, because it is important to me as an individual.

Based on my individual interactions with some of the school's teachers, they seemed to adopt the school philosophy of inclusion naturally as part of their daily school lives. Some of their comments suggested to me that some of them had not been exposed to schools that were less inclusive than Greenview. One of the teachers confirmed: "I just have been exposed to this kind of setting, adopted and assimilated to it, without even knowing that I intrinsically had or needed any special preparation or training." James supported this comment:

> I don't think that I go out of my way for ESL children; I just like to be with the children; I like to make them feel comfortable. I don't specifically have an agenda or a list of things to do. It is part of my everyday activities that I try to do for all children.

The data from participant observation reveal that most teachers were child-centered. This attitude was mainly exhibited in their loving and caring traits towards students in general. They naturally seemed to show genuine interest in making ESL students feel comfortable at school. Ellen further observed:

> I know if they are not happy, then we have to make them feel happier. I ask the other classmates what made them cry. Maybe there was something that they didn't understand; maybe they couldn't find their way to the class, they got lost or were embarrassed to ask for help.

Teachers were respectful of ESL students' level of comfort when involving them in class discussions. They were aware of ESL students' general unwillingness to volunteer answers. As a result, teachers allowed them some time to volunteer answers when they felt that ESL students wanted to become involved in class discussions. Ellen alluded to this issue:

> Once we get to know ESL children, sometimes we know that some of them are not happy when we call on them in class; they are not comfortable. They would rather dig a hole and crawl inside. They don't want to be acknowledged, and I think teachers really respect that.

Some authors have argued that this approach to questioning in the classroom could be evidence of teachers' explicit differential treatment of ESL students. Schinke-Llano (1983) claimed that teachers exhibit differential treatment of LEP students by virtue of their perceived inability to function in the classroom (p. 158). Moreover, Schinke-Llano further asserted that although differences in treatment may exist because of the lack of volunteering on the part of LEP students, non-LEP students who do not volunteer are frequently called upon (p. 157). However, I argue that teachers at Greenview chose not to call on ESL students to avoid making them feel embarrassed. Based on my observations, the classroom environment was not intimidating. ESL students chose not to volunteer answers because of their personal feelings of insecurity. For the most part, I realized that ESL students who remained quiet in most classes volunteered answers when they felt comfortable with the issues being discussed in class. For example, Bruce posed the following question: "Where is Brazil located?" Fred (an ESL student with a Latin American background), who appeared withdrawn in most classes, answered in a soft voice: "In South America." Ellen commented:

> I think we always ask them when we know they are comfortable answering the question, and I think if we probe with them if they don't know the answer and if they have a hard time expressing the answer, sometimes the children get

> embarrassed and then they just shut up, they shut up totally; they won't communicate at all. So most of the teachers and I would rather see a child volunteer.

My findings also reveal that teachers were not fully aware of ESL students' linguistic levels and needs. They were not acquainted with the mechanisms of acquiring English as a second language. Therefore, they did not always provide ESL learners with appropriate second-language assistance. Harklau (1994) stressed that mainstream teachers seem to be at loss in dealing with grammatical errors, such as verb tense and preposition errors. They lack the linguistics background necessary to explain to students how to correct their errors. As a result, some teachers choose to ignore errors entirely (p. 260). However, most teachers involved in this project acknowledged that some of their ESL students did not have the academic English-language skills to be able to follow the subject-area curriculum. I understood that teachers were unskilled in second-language instruction. Nevertheless, a truly inclusive environment for ESL students would involve multifaceted teachers who possess a general understanding of the dynamics of the second-language acquisition process.

On the other hand, I observed that most teachers saw the need for mainstream students to become more culturally aware. However, for a genuinely inclusive environment for ESL students, not only mainstream students, but also teachers need to be more culturally aware. It can be argued that it is easier to ignore cultural diversity and its current impact on Canadian society, to maintain levels of conformity, and to reinforce the status quo. Brown (1986) indicated that far too many teachers are ill-equipped to deal effectively with behaviors that represent conflicts between what is expected at school and what is accepted in the home and community (p. 21). During a casual conversation with one of the school facilitators, she said that she thought that one of her ESL students, Angela, a South American girl, had serious behavioral problems, because she had an unusual attitude. She complained that Angela was very energetic, difficult to control, and impulsive, and that she did not think carefully about what she was doing. I responded that

I felt that Angela's "behavioral problems" were cultural and that, in my opinion, Angela's unusual behavior was common of most Latin Americans. The school facilitator was amazed at this explanation. However, she agreed that Angela's problems could be related to cultural misunderstanding. During the weeks that followed, I observed Angela very closely and confirmed that she was very outgoing, energetic, outspoken, and friendly, probably more than the average Canadian child.

Most teachers followed action plans to eliminate potential racial barriers or signs of inequality between mainstream and ESL students. Likewise, they reported interest in encouraging the ESL students to retain their culture and first language while learning English. Ellen noted:

> At Greenview the atmosphere of accepting each other has been developed. Our philosophy is always to accept and to be accepting, to value everybody for uniqueness. I always say to the children who come to us, "Don't ever lose your first language." Adults have realized that it is important to hold on to both languages, to have another language and English; all of them become more powerful. Teachers always say to the children, "Keep your home language and keep learning it; but yet you also have to learn to use English." At home it is nice to speak the other languages, but to a certain degree, it is important that that children use English.

Reflections on mainstream teachers' interviews suggested that they played a major role in helping ESL students to acclimatize to the overall cultural environment of Greenview School. Some of the teachers expressed the need to become acquainted with their students' cultural backgrounds at the beginning of each school year.
Ellen mentioned that it was important for the teachers to give students the opportunity to teach them about the various cultures. She stated: "In Grade 7 language arts, one of the times the students do this is in the journeys unit. It is always the first unit; it is usually done at the beginning of the school year, in September." Most teachers agreed that this approach helped teachers to become acquainted with their students' cultural backgrounds, which in turn would enable them to facilitate the formation of peer networks as support systems for the new ESL students. Similarly, the teachers stated that by providing information sessions about the school dynamics, they were better able to make the ESL

students more comfortable in the school. According to Handscombe (1989) by providing orientation to the building and introduction to the staff members as well as to the basic rules of the school, including acceptable and unacceptable behavior, the school can help new registrants to become settled (p. 26). Ellen pointed out:

> We tell them what the school is, what the routine is like. We give them the time table; we tell them about the lockers. We tell them how they are going to move from class to class. We always find them a couple of buddies. We orient them to get them used to what we do.

This chapter has presented an overview of some of the most relevant characteristics of the participants involved in this research study. Only by understanding people's behaviors can we make sense of the classroom dynamics and have a broad understanding of the social situation being studied and the events that took place at Greenview School.

CHAPTER V

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO ESL STUDENTS' INCLUSION IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

Introduction

Carrasquillos and Rodriguez (1995) commented that the school is an institution created by the society aimed at providing opportunities for all students to acquire factual information, to develop skills, and to learn to think. Students attend school to become successful learners; that is, to increase their knowledge of facts and skills and to develop thinking strategies (p. 12). Based on this assumption, schools should provide all students with an appropriate learning environment aimed at developing their maximum potential. An effective learning environment for ESL students is success oriented. A friendly educational setting for ESL students enhances their freedom to participate by expressing themselves, experimenting, and exploring a new cultural and learning climate without feeling different.

Reflections from participant observation and teachers' interviews allowed me to describe some of the most common and relevant contributing factors to ESL students' inclusion in regular classrooms at Greenview School. If additional funds cannot be provided to solve the challenges of mainstreaming ESL students, then it will be necessary to develop strategies to optimize the existing resources.

Classroom Environment

ESL students' successful integration into the school system is based on equal treatment, which involves avoiding treating these students as "different." Urzua (1980) remarked that too often the term *different* has been translated into *deficient* (p. 43). For the most part, teachers who show differential treatment towards ESL students based on the underlying assumption that ESL students are not capable of doing what regular students are expected to do at any specific level, risk the development of ESL students'

full potential. If ESL students believe that they are not capable, they will have lower self-images and lower self-esteem, which in turn lead to lower academic self-expectations and actualization. Levin and Nolan (1996) explained that when students successfully demonstrate new learnings, they usually are positively reinforced intrinsically and extrinsically, which leads to the development of self-esteem and self-respect. High self-esteem motivates students to learn, which results in further self-actualization. The cycle continues only if schools create an environment in which the lower-level needs—physiological, safety and security, belonging, and affection—are met (p. 50).

A learning environment that provides ESL students with a sense of security will enhance their participation in academic and nonacademic tasks. In the same way, students who are not provided with a safe learning environment may withdraw from participation.

> Some studies indicate that a student's ability to learn in the classroom is reduced by at least 25 percent because of fear of other students (Dade County Public Schools, 1976; Lalli & Savitz, 1976). When this fear reaches a high enough level, students actually decide not to attend school (Wayne & Rubel, 1982). (Levin & Nolan, 1996, p. 29)

James, the Grade 7 social studies teacher, confirmed:

> I think that you have to provide students with an environment in which they can be successful, an environment in which they are going to be protected; then they can feel that they are part of that particular group. If you don't have that kind of attitude, then all the work that you do might not really pay off.

A secure learning environment encourages ESL students to be risk takers, to speak out, and to participate regardless of their English-language skills. A safe classroom environment will allow them to ask for information when needed, ask for repetition when ideas are not clear, express discomfort when something does not seem to be right for them, or just be an active member of the classroom. A safe learning environment will then help ESL students to learn more effectively. Stainback and Stainback (1996) asserted that teachers must foster a safe classroom and an orderly environment. Safety is important for learning because if a student does not trust that the environment is supportive and nurturing, he or she will not be comfortable and will not learn effectively (p. 118). Good

classroom-management skills will probably be required to facilitate and set the tone for a safe learning environment for ESL students. Zabel and Zabel (1996) stated that effective teachers are warm, nurturing, and socially reinforcing, while being firm, clear, and consistent (p. 57). Greg, a science teacher, stressed: "You have to make them feel comfortable; that is the most important thing. If they don't understand a word of what is going on around them, that is not important." James, who embraced the same philosophy, confirmed that one of the fundamental contributing factors for ESL students' academic adjustment is security:

> I think students' feeling of security is important. If you feel secure, you are going to take chances. Otherwise, it would be very difficult and very frustrating. If you want to be academically successful and don't feel secure, you are not going to take any chances, especially if you don't understand the language. So the children have to take chances; they have to try things out.

I found Greenview's learning environment safe, cohesive, and friendly, despite the fact that some ESL students remained quiet in class and others appeared apprehensive when approaching some of their teachers. Overall, they felt comfortable in the classrooms. I did not witness any putdowns when they participated in academic activities. The data gathered suggested that this positive classroom environment had been in place for a long time. Over the years, teachers have encouraged and maintained an effective learning environment at various levels. James remarked:

> The characteristics that are here are hard to quantify. You can't put formulas on them, and you can't say this is how you go about doing it. It just happens that way. That is the philosophy of the school and the people who are in this school. It had been in place even before I came here.

Norah, a language arts teacher, commented on her previous experience with one of her ESL students, described how a supportive learning environment for ESL students encourages them to take risks and participate in academic activities in the classroom:

> I think that some of the ESL students are scared to risk, to make mistakes. I had a girl last year who barely spoke at all, and if she did, she was very, very quiet. It was because she was scared to speak with strange sounds in front of her peers. She knew she sounded different from other people, and that was an intimidation to her.

> I encouraged her to speak and praised her when she did, confirming to her that she was doing well and that she was progressing. This year she voluntarily puts up her hand.

Fostering a safe learning environment and classroom attitude for ESL students is an essential contributing factor to their successful inclusion in regular classrooms. As Igoa (1995) stated, a silent stage is like a period of incubation during which the child must be provided with a warm and nurturing environment that makes it safe for him or her eventually to break out of a shell and accept himself or herself as belonging in a diverse society. Supporting the child through this crucial period is more efficient than the "sink or swim" approach of placing the child into the mainstream (p. 38).

Flexibility

Effective teachers maximize students' participation in curricular and extracurricular activities. According to Stainback and Stainback (1996), some families who have children with physical challenges show flexibility and the ability to respond spontaneously with whatever strategy is required to "make the moment work" and include their child in the activities of their family. Similarly, educators must acquire the same abilities to respond quickly to the challenges of supporting students with diverse abilities to participate in school activities (p. 59). Considering the fact that some ESL students are limited by their English-language challenges, teachers should facilitate the necessary conditions for them to participate so that they can develop a sense of involvement.

By being patient, modifying curricular activities and methods of evaluation, providing various kinds of assignments, and allocating extra time if needed, teachers will meet ESL students' needs in regular classrooms. Greg, the science teacher, commented that by adapting the program and modifying the exams and quizzes, ESL students were given a sense of achievement at Greenview School. He further remarked:

> We don't want them faced with the aspects of failure on a consistent basis. The idea is that through small successes, all students learn to achieve. They work hard, and they see something develop from it, and they try again and that positive attitude is more important than anything else here at this school.

My observation of the Greenview School dynamics was that the learning environment for ESL students was both flexible and inflexible. Some of the school's teachers demonstrated an understanding of the need to provide ESL students with various feasible activities within a flexible time frame. Most teachers interviewed saw flexibility as an essential contributing factor to ESL students' successful integration into the school system. However, my participant observation revealed that most teachers assigned the same activities to all students, with the same deadlines. One of the teachers confirmed: "I have fairly high expectations of the ESL children; therefore I will give them about the same amount of time as the other students."

Providing ESL students with flexibility will enable them to choose activities that make them feel comfortable instead of being intimidated by the complexity of the task assigned. Zabel and Zabel (1996) remarked that based on the fact that students' success is strongly related to their academic performance, it is not surprising that some students avoid activities where they often fail (p. 130). Cynthia remarked that students can be encouraged to participate in academic activities when they are given different choices:

> I give choices, so I always try to encourage them to participate in whatever we do; and if they don't, then I try to focus on giving them a choice; and they have to pick, I guess, the best for them. I find that I am flexible, so that, if they don't want to participate in one way, I always try to encourage them to participate in another way.

Norah, a language arts teacher, explored some of the methods of enhancing ESL students' participation in curricular activities by providing different choices or task alternatives:

> Instead of having a student write a story, have them do the story where they can express their ideas with diagrams or limited writing or simple sentences, or just giving them a variety of assignments so that they are succeeding for themselves. Have something to make them be proud of themselves, and they want to try more.

The traditional approach, "one size fits all," does not allow flexible alternatives for ESL students. Teachers must become more accommodating to recognize and acknowledge students' varying needs, learning styles and challenges. Thus, patience, flexible time, methods of evaluation, and academic choices are factors that foster ESL students' sense of involvement. This, in turn, contributes to their sense of progress and success in regular academic activities.

Modified Program

Most teachers interviewed suggested that Greenview had an alternate program in place to accommodate the various learning challenges of their students. Bruce mentioned: "If it is deemed to be by the administration and the support staff, ESL students are placed in an alternate program." According to Ellen, the school support staff determined which ESL students were placed in the school modified program on the following bases: students' past performance, teachers' recommendations, parents' request, or the results of the TONI II (Test of Nonverbal Intelligence). Ellen mentioned that the TONI II ability test, specifically designed for students who have limited English-language skills, was intended to be effective because it relied on the use of symbols instead of the usual English language of most IQ tests. As described by some of the teachers, a modified program for ESL students at Greenview School involved mainly alternate forms of evaluation and different types of projects geared to focus on vocabulary and some lower-level skills. Apple and Weis (1983) remarked that it has been argued that students are hierarchically ordered based on the cultural forms of the dominant groups. Students of different race, class, and sex are taught different norms, skills, values, knowledge, and dispositions. In this way, schools help meet the economy's demand for a stratified social system (p. 5). The data and evidence presented here will demonstrate that Greenview's modified program could be a segregating option for ESL students.

Although it is important to provide ESL students with some flexibility, such as adequate time to complete the tasks or various task choices, the danger of a modified program for ESL students would be in expecting them to develop only lower-level skills. Not having high enough expectations for ESL students would result then, in lower academic performance. Brown (1986) pointed out that, in general, students who are not expected to make significant progress experience limited opportunities to engage actively in learning activities. These students, most of whom are minorities, come under fewer teacher demands for academic performance and increasing demands for conformance in terms of behavior (p. 32). Mr. Kinneard suggested that a modified program for students could be a "double-edged sword." He asserted: "We do modify programs to fit a child's needs, but even there there is danger maybe our modifications are reducing our students' capabilities." Mr. Kinneard further explained the school's slightly exclusive concept of the school's modified program:

> We try to incorporate all our children into our regular classrooms, but we do pull them out from time to time. We pull our ESL children out from time to time as well, but with one goal: to get them into the mainstream. Our goal is inclusive. We sometimes work slightly exclusively.

This study confirmed that out of the 13 ESL students involved in this project, 5 were placed in the school's modified program: Fred, Sandra, Irene, Nicholas, and Joseph. Overall, teachers understood Greenview School's modified program mainly as an academic support for lower-than-average achievers to adapt better to the school. Regarding this program, Bruce remarked that there were various methods in place that permitted the student to be graded or evaluated based on effort and academic achievement. He further described some of the mechanisms of the school's modified program as follows:

> With the help of our extra staff, we have been better able to create programs to meet the specific needs of ESL children. We fit them into our normal program; we teach them from the same textbooks as all the other students. Our methods of evaluation sometimes are different, different to the point where if they require an exam to be read to them, then it will be read to them, and I think it is working.

Most participant teachers understood the modified program's flexibility as a way to bring about inclusion. In fact, they remarked that the alternate program allowed students of different levels of ability to be included in regular classrooms. According to Greg, they accommodated some of their students' learning difficulties by adapting the program, exams, and quizzes; and by extending deadlines if possible. However, being immersed in the school for three months allowed me clearly to understand the other side of Greenview's modified program.

The term *modified program* was very open. According to Ellen, one of the school facilitators: "A modified program could mean something very modified, drastically changed, or a little bit modified." Ellen compared Greenview's modified and regular programs as follows:

> For example, if we have a child who is in a modified program and a child who is in a regular program, the student on the regular program may get 75% on a five-page essay. On the other hand, the child who is in a modified program might have written three paragraphs and got the same mark of 75%. The marks are the same; the work was different. The difference is on the report card. It will state "Modified."

Ellen further added that with the modified program, teachers were allowed to be flexible: "The modified program gives teachers the flexibility to do the adjusting as much or as little as it needs to be done for that child." However, such flexibility was stipulated by "Modified Mark" on students' report cards. Nevertheless, students required parental consent to be enrolled in a modified program. Accordingly, teachers explained to the students' parents the dynamics of the modified program. Ellen clarified:

> We are going to adjust your child's program to his or her level. That may mean we have to put down three, four, five, or six grades. If parents say, "That is okay; I want my child to be successful and happy. Please do so," then they give the written consent.

Ellen mentioned that a child did not have to remain in the program. He/she was allowed to exit it when teachers felt that the student did not need the extra academic support. Ellen explained:

> If things are getting better and things are going well and the child is doing very well, he doesn't need those supports; he doesn't need to have the program modified. We can take that away, and they go back on the regular program.

Ellen further clarified that the school's modified program was not exclusively for ESL students, but for all students who required additional academic assistance. However, this study is concerned with ESL students, and it can be argued that the long-term effect of this educational solution for them was segregating in nature. The disadvantage of this alternative is the danger of ESL students' remaining in the program. Ellen explained the consequences of students' continuity in the school's modified program:

> If students are doing well on a modified program, and depending on how much the program is modified, if it is modified significantly, they might not be able to take Level 10 or Grade 10; then they might have to take a Level 13, 14, or even 16. In other words, no students can take Level 10 unless they have a 65% average or better.

Ellen remarked that if students did well in Level 13 and obtained a good mark, they would be able to pursue an academic route and take Level 20 or 30. It can be argued that, in theory, ESL students are able to pursue an academic high school education. However, in practice some ESL students require more time and academic support to complete their junior high school education successfully and pursue an academic route at a high school level. Ellen's previous comments on ESL students' inability to go on to Level 10 courses suggest that ESL students could be marginalized not only from regular instruction, but also from the educational system in Alberta. She further mentioned that students placed in a Grade 9 modified program were made aware of the fact that they would not be able to take upper-level courses or even to obtain a high school diploma. In this case, students who were unable to take upper-level courses were recommended to attend a high school with specialized ESL programs. Because most schools with specialized ESL instruction in Edmonton offer different vocational choices in addition to academics, ESL students are able to choose a vocational route. According to Jackson (1987), routine decisions and actions of students, teachers, and counselors regarding

vocational education are rooted in, and serve to reproduce, existing forms of ethnic inequality (p. 165).

Greenview's modified program was meant to be a transitional academic support for ESL students. However, the fact that some ESL students were unable to exit before completing Grade 9 or unable to go to a regular program after completing this level would put at risk their participation in postsecondary academic education. Jackson's (1987) research on immigrant students' selection of vocational courses in an inner-city high school in a working-class neighborhood in the Vancouver area revealed a diffuse but pervasive relationship between vocational education and ethnicity (p. 180). It was observed that most Chinese students were led by teachers and counselors to choose introductory accounting, which was taught in the business department as a vocational elective at the Grade 11 level (p. 168). Jackson remarked that this course does not enroll students who intend to pursue accounting through the commerce department at the university, because this would require them to take academic rather than vocational electives in the high school (p. 168). Jackson further explained that vocational courses at the high school level have the general effect of limiting and narrowing future options for students rather than expanding them (p. 166).

Considering Jackson's (1987) relationship between ethnicity and vocationalism, one could argue that Greenview School's modified program, rather than being a transitional academic and English-language support for ESL students, could foster existing unequal ethnic and social relationships in Canada. Intentionally or unintentionally, some ESL students are prevented from pursuing academic education at a postsecondary level.

A Team Approach to Cooperative Planning

Teachers working together can make inclusion successful. Cooperative relationships with fellow teachers can increase ESL students' productivity and inclusion at school. According to Stainback and Stainback (1990), collaboration among team members

is key to successful inclusion of all students in a regular class. Collaboration involves a nonhierarchical relationship in which all the team members are seen as equal contributors, each adding his or her own experience to the problem-solving process (p. 96).

Collaborative teaming in the development of curricular and instructional adaptations is fundamental in facilitating ESL students' inclusion in regular classrooms. With a team approach, members also develop a sense of support and empowerment to cope with the challenges of including ESL students in regular academic activities. Stainback and Stainback (1990) remarked that through the efforts of a good team, the need for belonging is satisfied as a sense of caring is developed. The need for power is satisfied when individuals have opportunities to be listened to and affirmed, and the effect of what they could do alone is multiplied (p. 97).

Reflections on teachers' interviews and observations of Greenview's teaching practices demonstrated that most teachers were cooperatively oriented. As indicated by the school principal, Mr. Kinneard, the school's inclusive environment resulted from the effectiveness of the school's inclusive team. At Greenview teachers planned together and supported and communicated with each other. By using group problem-solving skills, teachers could benefit from individual efforts to meet their students' needs. Norah expanded:

> With language arts over the years we have been really encouraged by our administration and amongst ourselves to cooperatively plan, so that we can bounce ideas off each other and come up with units geared to the many needs of the students.

Greenview's teachers genuinely embraced the idea of cooperative planning. It entailed for them friendly relationships with each other, which they extended to their students. I found this cohesive working environment to be strongly related to ESL students' better integration into mainstream classrooms. Cynthia, alluding to one of the factors that had led them to develop an inclusive environment for ESL students, commented: "Working together, planning together, marking together is important because

I think when you do it with someone else, you not only have other input rather than just your own, but also another teaching style."

Ellen's described the process:

> We have a support system in place. We sit down at each unit; we design the unit's objectives and the main projects together. We examine how we are going to evaluate our students. We discuss, "Can our ESL child do that? Can our special-needs child do that? Can our learning-disabled student do that?" In most cases, they can't, so we have to make the adjustments for them to be able to do it.

An effective cooperative team finds different avenues to make their objectives achievable for all students. They keep in mind students' abilities and strengths rather than focusing on disabilities and weaknesses. Stainback and Stainback (1990) pointed out that often when educational teams get together, they dwell upon things that the individual cannot do as opposed to identifying and building upon strengths and abilities of individuals (p. 106). By considering ways in which ESL students can participate in academic activities, taking into account what ESL students can do rather than what they cannot as well as their likes and dislikes, teachers working together can make them feel more comfortable at school.

Students' Personalities

Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1996) declared that the literature tended to identify cognitive abilities, age, and personality as important factors in the academic and linguistic development of second-language learners (p. 29). Although this study does not attempt to discuss ESL students' cognitive abilities, it can be argued that personality, especially the ability to persevere, is a key factor that can either enhance or hinder students' overall inclusion in the school.

ESL students' concentrated efforts to end the silent stage that they initially experience may accelerate their academic and cultural adjustment to the school. Greg's comments on some of the factors that enhance ESL students' inclusion in Greenview School are as follows:

> If they can all overcome that initial shyness, that shyness where they don't want to talk to their teacher, they don't want to ask for help, that would be very helpful. If they could say to themselves, "I am going to the teacher and try to say this, or show him that I don't understand," whether it comes out the classic "I no understand" and you shake your head and you show with your shoulders, "I know what you are saying," that would certainly help a lot more. If the teacher knows what they can and cannot do, the teacher will try to accommodate them.

ESL students' inclusion in regular classrooms requires both an institutional and an individual commitment to make this happen. Some of the factors previously discussed such as the classroom environment, flexibility, and cooperative planning would not promote ESL students' participation in curricular and extracurricular activities if they do not feel capable. Mr. Kinneard, supporting this argument, commented:

> If students don't feel that they can succeed, if they are convinced, because learning this language is just too hard, they can't succeed, then one of the best mechanisms for them is to withdraw. Rather than being passive resisters, they need to be aggressive resisters.

Ellen commented that ESL students achieved successful integration into the school through their own motivation. She further pointed out: "If ESL students have support and they are accepting of help, if they are motivated, responsible, driven, and willing to do their work, they are going to be able to succeed and to move on."

My observations revealed that ESL students need to help themselves in their own integration and in their English-acquisition process even when surrounded by a cohesive, inclusive atmosphere. For example, some of the students who were shy, timid, or less self-confident had various difficulties when trying to succeed academically at Greenview School. Some of them were Fred, Irene, and Nicholas.

James, a social studies teacher, also commented that all the school efforts would not pay off if they did not assist themselves in their English-language acquisition. He further stated:

> If you have that cocoon attitude that you are there to help them, to protect them, ESL students can do well. On the other hand, they have to do whatever they can to pick up the language, because down the road that is really the key to success.

As described previously, I found that ESL students involved in this project presented diverse characteristics. Some were outgoing, motivated, and outspoken, and were involved in most curricular and extracurricular activities. Others remained quiet and introverted and preferred to work by themselves. However, for the most part, I perceived that most of the ESL students were integrating well culturally. Based on my own perceptions and unrecorded isolated conversations with them, I found that the vast majority felt that they were being accepted. Generally, I found that the ESL students involved in this study were happy to be at Greenview School, regardless of some of their academic difficulties. They enjoyed not only the school's inclusive environment, but also their peers and their teachers. Nicholas's answer to my question, "How do you feel about this school?" was "Very happy" Roberto agreed and commented: "I think that this is a very nice school." I feel that a sense of belonging contributed to these ESL students' positive feelings about the school.

ESL Students' Family Support and Parental Involvement

The data gathered from some of the teachers' interviews suggest that ESL students' parents did not participate in their children's linguistic and academic development. In fact, some teachers acknowledged that they had not seen some of the ESL students' parents at all. Greg noted: "There are many ESL students whose parents I have never met. I know they feel uncomfortable because the English language is a barrier for them."

My findings reveal that some ESL students parents' lack of involvement in their children's education at school could be a result of various circumstances. Isolated and unrecorded conversations with some of the school's teachers suggested that the reasons that kept ESL parents' detached from their children's schooling could range from parents' lack of English-language skills to lower levels of self-esteem, in most cases resulting from their lower socioeconomic status in Canada. However, the data reveal that some teachers

placed great value in increasing ESL students parents' involvement in their children's education. Greg further expanded:

> I would strongly encourage all parents when they come into the country to be an active participant in their children's learning. Try to know the teachers, each of them by name; meet them not just on parent-teacher interviews, by making an opportunity to come by the school. I'd like to see parents coming around a lot and show that they are concerned about how their child is doing.

Mr. Kinneard also referred to family values as one of the major factors that contributed to the students' overall successful integration into regular classroom activities: "This is not exclusive to ESL students, support from the family, expectations at home, the homework is done. . . . If you want your child to do well in school, he/she has to know that it is an important family value."

Cynthia also agreed on family values as one of factors that enhance ESL students' academic integration: "I think that the family contributes a lot. It also depends on the students' families' views. It education is viewed as important, it is going to be important for them."

Cummins (1993) affirmed that dramatic changes in children's academic progress can be realized when educators take the initiative to change the exclusionary pattern to one of collaboration (p. 109). Considering their parents' absence from the school, it can be argued that the school must make an effort to involve ESL students in school activities, because most parents will not take this initiative by themselves. Cummins further suggested that it was found to be both feasible and practicable to involve nearly all parents in educational activities such as listening to their children read, even when the parents were nonliterate and largely non-English speaking (p. 109).

Being aware that more parental involvement would enhance ESL students' integration into the school, Greenview School needed to implement alternatives to include these parents in their children's education. According to Nieto (1992), data analysis confirmed that parents do indeed become more involved when the school gives them some direction (p. 82).

My research study reveals that some evident and important factors contributed to ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. However, to optimize the existing resources, some teaching strategies needed to be used as well. The following chapter discusses some inclusive teaching practices to maximize ESL students' participation in curricular and extracurricular activities at school.

CHAPTER VI

INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES FOR ESL STUDENTS

Introduction

The use of inclusive teaching practices for ESL students will enhance their overall participation in different school activities. "We believe that in the 1990s classroom teachers at all levels of instruction will be strongly encouraged, and in some cases pressured, to modify the way they conceptualized and deliver instruction" (Davidman & Davidman, 1994, p. 75). This chapter will focus on how the physical setting, teachers' expectations, and both curricular and extracurricular activities can increase the overall participation of ESL students in both academic and nonacademic tasks at school.

Classroom Setting

The impact of the physical setting on ESL students' integration into the school can be remarkable. I will discuss some of the features that make a classroom setting functional for ESL students. First of all, a classroom is a place where students interact not only with other students, but also with their teacher. Rigg and Enright (1986) described the classroom as part of the world in which there is always a reason for people to speak to others, to listen to what others are saying, to write to others, and to read what others have written (p. 2). A classroom setting could either stimulate or inhibit ESL students' participation in regular academic activities.

This part of the study will be concerned with physical conditions that may be conducive to integrating ESL students into regular classrooms. ESL students' language development is an interactive process. Consequently, the level of participation in academic activities at school is enhanced in an interactive learning environment. As well, the location of the ESL students in the classroom is an important consideration. Zabel and Zabel (1996) remarked that, generally, students who sit in the "front and center" near the teacher are more active participants in the class. Sitting in the back or on the periphery of

the classroom can communicate a reluctance to participate. Thus shy, withdrawn students distance themselves from the teacher and other students to avoid interaction (p. 46).

The data reveal that Greenview's teachers were very concerned with ESL students' placement in the classroom. Most ESL students were placed in the front row, and those who were placed in the back of the classroom were located near a friend or a "buddy." Cynthia, one of the language arts teachers, commented on some of the physical conditions that should exist for ESL students: "proximity, closeness to the teacher, and proximity and closeness to their friends." Additionally, she mentioned that some resources such as dictionaries or charts needed to be nearby. She further expanded: "I like to have some poetry charts up, visuals too. The physical condition is important in terms of where they are sitting, what is up on the walls also proximity to other people."

In the teachers' interviews, they revealed that their philosophy of pairing students with a classmate or a friend in the classroom. They felt strongly about students' proximity to other students and to the teacher. Ellen referred to this: "I like to put them close to the front, where they can keep their eyes on their teacher, or I sit them beside someone who can help them." The benefits of this philosophy will be discussed further in this study. However, Bruce, a social studies teacher, remarked that the physical conditions should reflect "normal" conditions as far as possible. He elaborated:

> When you accommodate people, you are creating problems, not only for ESL students, but also for the rest of the class. If there is a teacher's aide or support staff worker who is there to help the student, and they are there constantly, but they help all the students and all the students accept that teacher as part of the environment, then the aide is a healthy attribute. But if there is a teacher's aide and that teacher's aid is strictly for that student's use, then it is almost like having a stigma attached to you, and I don't see that as being helpful; I see that as a detriment to the student.

Norah commented that ESL students needed to be placed where they felt comfortable:

> I always place them where they are comfortable. I don't want them to feel singled out. I don't want to put them in the back, because they tend to hide. I'd like to encourage them to sit closer so it is easier for me to notice what they are doing and make little comments, quiet things, to them, because if they are at the back, my interaction with them would be more obvious.

This study is not concerned with encouraging teachers to bring about considerable changes to the classroom. It does not attempt to challenge mainstream teachers either. However, based on data gathered from participant observation, I feel that the front row is not the most desirable place for ESL students. The data reveal that teachers tended to observe more and interact more frequently with those students who were placed in the center rather the front row of the classroom. Nevertheless, based on the fact that ESL students at Greenview School were adjusting and integrating fairly well into the classroom environment, major changes in the physical setting were unnecessary. The fact that most teachers were more concerned with the ESL students' proximity to a "buddy," a friend or a classmate, made the classroom environment an almost ideal place for ESL students at Greenview School to integrate.

Teachers' Expectations

ESL as much as mainstream students need to succeed at school. In order to become achievers, they need to meet teachers' expectations. How do teachers set their expectations for ESL students? Teachers must have equal expectations of all students, regardless of their academic or English-language skills or of their classification within the school system. Equal educational opportunities for ESL students imply equal expectations for all students. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1996) stated:

> Mainstream educators should be prepared to challenge LEP students in the same way that other students in the school are challenged. Educators need to see LEP students as equal to their other English proficient students in terms of cognitive and social strengths. At the same time, these educators should be sensitive to students' linguistic needs as well as cultural and ethnic differences. These differences should be seen as an enrichment factor to the classroom, rather than as deficiencies to be eradicated from the students. (p. 7)

Grouping and classification of students according to ability has become a common practice in most schools around the province. Mr. Kinneard commented that for the school to receive funding for ESL students, they needed to be tested to demonstrate that they needed additional academic or language support and could be classified as ESL students. During the school year 1996-1997 Greenview School had 28 funded ESL students out 67 who qualified as ESL students. As mentioned earlier, ESL students are English-language tested through the Woodcock-Munoz English-language survey for the additional funding required for extra staff. Ellen mentioned that most landed-immigrant students qualified for extra funding for three years, the funding cap. In her words, "After that period of time, if ESL students required extra funding, they had to be retested." However, the school had to make a case for funding to apply again.

This background information, particularly the fact that ESL students need to be tested and "labeled" as ESL students, could set a frame of reference for Greenview teachers' differential treatment of these students. However, Mr. Kinneard's philosophy regarding teachers' expectations appeared to benefit ESL students. In his opinion, lower expectation for ESL students was a "two-edged sword": "If we lower our expectations, we might provide ESL students with success, but we are not challenging them." He further mentioned:

> I think that we could adapt our expectations so that the child who is striving could be successful, as opposed to being the best in competing against the province. But I think there is a real danger in modifying teachers' expectations too. Students could be treated differently, and they could be treated at a much lower level quite easily. If we look at some segregating school in the Unites States, that is exactly what they did. They adapted the curriculum, and the results were inferior.

Teachers' expectations affect ESL students' integration into mainstream classrooms either positively or negatively. Hill (1989) remarked that when teachers accept their students as capable of learning and performing, this communicates a powerful message to them of hope, assurance, positive intentions, and, most of all, the belief that the students have worth (p. 15). Most teachers involved in this research study admitted to

having high expectations for all their students, regardless of their English or other learning challenges. In reflecting on the participants' interviews, I realized that teachers' high expectations for ESL students were reflected in the school philosophy and the theme of the school year: "Be the best you can." Mr. Kinneard:

> We expect them to be the best. If that is what we are going to live by, then we have to say that we expect ESL students to advance their language skills. They'd better be better at speaking English when they end this year than they were at the beginning of the year.

Bruce made the following comment regarding his high expectations for his students:

> I expect more from my students than they are probably able to give. That is my bias. I feel that unless you expect a lot, you are not going to get a lot. If you expect the lower common denominator, they are not going to surprise you, they are going to give you the lowest common denominator. So if you ask for more than they are able to give, you get a remarkable effort—my *most*. Some of them don't give the effort because they are pushed too far, but you try to provide safeguards by telling them: "If you need the help, come and see me." With ESL students, again I have high expectations for them within reason. You know that there is a language barrier, you know that there are other difficulties involved, but you can't use that as an excuse. If they want to succeed in a culture and in a society of people like the rest of their class, then they are going to have to meet high expectations. More often enough the expectations are higher than the normal class; it is just the evaluation that is modified to accommodate their abilities.

Cynthia also suggested that she had high expectations for all her students. She further remarked:

> I expect an honest effort from all of them. When I see honest effort, when I see that they try their best, I am fine. That works with all my students in general. I expect respect for the classroom, whether you are White, Brown or Black.

James reported having the same high expectations for all of his students:

> I expect the children to do the very best they can do. I expect them to do their work. I expect them to come to school or to class prepared. I expect them to have good manners and listen to others when others are talking.

Norah concluded:

> I expect from all students in general that they always try their best and that they take pride in their work. I expect the same thing from ESL students. I think that ESL students do that by nature, because they feel that they need to do this. Other students kind of take it for granted. As long as they are trying their best and you know that they are working at it, then I feel that they've met my expectations.

Setting high expectations for ESL students at school does not necessarily guarantee their academic success. For ESL students to meet teachers' expectations, they have to be provided with various kinds of activities where they can achieve their academic potential regardless of the English-language barriers. James commented: "I expect that as ESL students become more comfortable, and as long as I provide them with some activities, I expect them to try their very best to complete them, and I take them from there." I will further discuss in this chapter how ESL students' learning can be improved through a variety of instructional methods, including cooperative learning, well-monitored individual projects, verbal and nonverbal communication, and audiovisual aids.

Curricular Activities

The data presented in this part of the study rely strongly on discovery-oriented description, because my research approach was based on participant observation. I will illustrate how, in some specific cases, the classroom instruction was delivered and describe some classroom activities performed by Greenview School's teachers. I will make some suggestions as to how instructional activities could be organized to enhance ESL students' participation in curricular activities.

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction was the most common teaching method used at Greenview School. The data gathered from participant observation reveal that some teaching strategies promote a more effective environment for ESL students if the oral instruction and evaluation used synonyms or simpler words; the use of English for instructional

purposes can affect ESL students' level of comprehension of the subject matter. For example, the following case took place in a Grade 7 social studies class. Of the 44 minutes allocated for instructional time, 5 minutes was allowed for classroom management. In a 39-minute lecture related to Quebec, its "special" status, and issues related to multiculturalism, the teacher used, among other expressions, the following: "The people defeated a proposal to have the Quebec government accomplish an agreement to separate from Canada." One of the mainstream students then asked him: "What is *defeated*?" After observing that a mainstream student was not able to understand the meaning of the word *defeated*, I recorded words that I would have trouble understanding or for which I would need to use an English dictionary. The vocabulary used during this class included *concessions, consent, ruling, previous, controversy, empire, far-reaching, wisdom, siblings, foothills, extreme, measure, completely absorbed,* and *sovereignty*. Because of the teacher's pace of instruction and the fact that I was taking handwritten notes, I could not record all of the words and expressions he used in this particular class. Then another mainstream student asked: "What is the meaning of *sovereignty*?" The teacher answered: "Sovereignty is a simple word for independence." Wong-Fillmore (1989) pointed out that instructional language works for language learners not only when it is comprehensible, but also when it is used in ways that offer multiple access to its meaning (p. 127).

Additionally, the following recorded notes will illustrate how teachers' use of the English language might interfere with communication. These notes were taken in the same class, a Grade 7 social studies class. All students were writing a test. Roberto, one of the ESL students, went to the teacher to ask him a question about the test. Roberto seemed disappointed because he did not understand his teacher's explanation. His teacher gave him another explanation, and Roberto continued to be confused. Then Roberto asked him the meaning of the word *incentives*. His teacher answered: "They are motivators." Roberto went back to his desk and continued writing his test.

When I interviewed Roberto's teacher, he replied that Grade 7 social studies had a tremendous emphasis on terms. Based on the observation of these classroom dynamics, and knowing that most ESL speakers have difficulty processing spoken language, I suggested the use of synonyms as an alternative both to expand mainstream students' English vocabulary and to help ESL students' to interpret the teacher's verbal communication. Moreover, an explanation of some of the terms at the beginning of the class or exam would be beneficial to ESL students' understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, Norah, a language arts teacher, suggested that the use of various kinds of strategies such as changing the vocabulary and sentences, keeping sentences short and simple, or even speaking slower would be helpful for ESL students as well. According to Zabel and Zabel (1996), classroom communication is not one way; rather, communication is both interactive and dynamic—it is interactive in that it requires at least two persons exchanging information. Teachers' instructions, lectures, or demonstrations do not communicate unless students understand them (p. 38).

Using Synonyms

The use of synonyms could make content instruction more comprehensible to ESL students. For example, through the use of synonyms a language arts teacher made her classroom instruction more interesting, enjoyable, and understandable for ESL students at Greenview School. I feel that because all subject areas are interrelated, the following technique could be useful in other areas of instruction. The students were silently reading a poem. When they were finished, the teacher said to them: "Now, I want you to pick up a word that you have never seen before. Judging by its context, tell what you think each word means." She wrote down eight unfamiliar words in eight different sentences, such as, "The heavens were resplendent with the northern lights." Judging by the context, her students came up with the following synonyms for *resplendent*: *brilliant, marvelous, beautiful, splendid, very bright, shinning, dazzling,* and *bright.* Then she suggested that

they look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary to confirm the meanings that they had given to the words. After she explored the unfamiliar vocabulary in detail, she asked them to read the poem. I found this activity to be very useful for all students, especially the three ESL students in the class. They were able to follow, step by step, the procedures described, and all of them completed their assignment before the class ended. Meyer (1985) and Urzua (1981; both as cited in Wong-Fillmore, 1989) commented that second-language learning does not just happen in school; it is stimulated by active teaching, careful presentation of materials, good input, and ample opportunities to hear and practice the new language in the context of meaningful and purposeful communication (p. 126).

Flexibility, Meaningful Activities, and Enough Time

The data reveal that ESL students participated more in curricular activities when they were given choices (flexibility), through contextualization (across different areas of instruction or meaningful activities), and when they had enough time to complete the assigned task. One of the assignments of the Grade 7 and 8 language arts curriculum was to write an essay. The students were allowed to choose from a variety of topics across content areas. The procedure was that, after being given basic instruction about essay writing, the students had to research any chosen subtopic related to the solar system. The teacher gave them ideas on how to choose a subtopic and do the research. The students could use either the Internet or the school library, and they could do their research either in pairs or by themselves. Both Grade 7 and 8 language arts teachers systematically followed the same procedures. Hudelson (1986) stated that effective writing for ESL learners takes place when, within the school setting, young ESL learners write on a variety of topics (across the content areas of the curriculum), for a variety of purposes (e.g., to reflect on ideas, express feelings, present information, entertain with a story, narrate events, give an opinion, etc.) to a variety of audiences (themselves, other children, and other adults; p. 49).

This confirmed that English is learned better through meaningful experiences in which ESL students were motivated to do their research and write. They felt comfortable with the essay writing because they were writing on a topic that they enjoyed. Rigg and Enright (1986) pointed out that one of Hudelson's (1986) major findings on children's writing development, in both first- and second-language students, referred to the context in which writing occurs, which affects both the specific piece of writing and the long-term development of writing (p. 3). Moreover, I found this activity to be useful because ESL students at Greenview were encouraged to write on topics across the different content areas of instruction. In addition, because the time allocated to this activity—four weeks—the students had plenty of time to complete their assignments. They worked on their essays at school and were encouraged to work on them outside of school as well. Hudelson concluded that ESL learners should receive multiple opportunities to compose and to express their ideas in written form. Although children may choose to write outside of school, time for writing must also be provided during the school day (p. 49).

Contextualization

Zabel and Zabel (1996) stated that contextualization involves using culturally based materials and approaches, including visual/holistic processes that can benefit both minority- and majority-culture students (p. 41). Although I expected that a social studies class would rely highly on audiovisual aids and involve students' life experiences, I observed quite the opposite. Some classroom instruction relied heavily on textbook reading. I observed closely three ESL students in a Grade 8 social studies class. Most of the time when the teacher was either reading to students or listening to their reading, the three ESL students sat with their heads bent over their desks, paying little attention to the teacher or to their peers' reading in class. Of 10 classes observed, 7 were focused on text reading. The remaining three were observed while writing an exam, while giving an oral presentation, and while being instructed on a written assignment.

Content instruction could be more interesting, effective, and practical for all students if teachers encouraged ESL students to discuss real-life experiences and offer their opinions. Adamson (1993) asserted that one of the reasons that ESL students are reluctant to speak in class is their fear of revealing a lack of knowledge about the subject matter (p. 89). As a participant observer, I confirmed that ESL students could be encouraged to participate in curricular activities. For example, in a class on Brazil—its economy, location, etc.—the teacher stopped reading to ask a question: "Where is Brazil located?" Fred, who usually sat with his head bent over his desk, replied: "In South America." This was the first time I had seen him participating in the class. He remained motivated for approximately 10 minutes. Empowering ESL students through asking them questions on familiar subject matter to which they are likely to know the answers not only encourages them to participate in class, but also exposes mainstream students to real-life experiences.

ESL Student-Teacher Interactions

Schinke-Llano (1986) argued that teachers interact significantly less frequently with LEP students than with their native-English-speaking counterparts (p. 100). The following example in a language arts class may illustrate how in some cases teachers interact slightly less frequent with their ESL students. Students from Grade 8 were involved in independent or group research for an essay-writing activity. The research was supposed to be conducted either in the library or in the computer room; some ESL students chose to do an Internet search, and others chose to do library research. The language arts teacher was in the library with a group of students. Two ESL students, Sandra and Manuel, were doing individual readings. The teacher helped Manuel put his ideas together for his essay. She had spent almost three minutes when she was interrupted by a mainstream student who asked her for help. She moved to this student's table while the two ESL students continued working on their individual research. She spent a long

time—15 minutes—working with this mainstream student. In the meantime Manuel called her again and she asked him to "wait a minute" in a very friendly way, while she continued with her mainstream student. She returned to Manuel and said to me: "Can you see how all the students call me at the same time?" I realized that she had been helping Manuel, but she had not asked Sandra if she needed help.

During the numerous self-directed learning activities I observed, I perceived that the mainstream teachers had a tendency to interact more frequently with and provide constant feedback to mainstream students than to ESL students. Cummins (1993) remarked that students from the "dominated" societal groups are "empowered" or "disabled" as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the school (p. 104). Rodriguez (1994) maintained that research clearly indicated that teachers support perceived high achievers and engage in dominating behaviors with perceived low achievers (p. 104). However, I feel that teachers' slightly more frequent interaction with mainstream students was not so problematic that it could become a barrier to ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, ESL students appear to need more one-on-one support from teachers to succeed academically, and there must be increasing levels of interaction between teachers and ESL students, especially during self-directed learning activities.

Well-Monitored Self-Directed Learning Activities

Grade 7 and 8 social studies and language arts classes at Greenview involved self-directed learning activities. Generally, these curricular activities were conducted in the school library or in the computer room. It appeared that, although this activity could be an enriching learning experience for ESL students, in a number of cases the teacher failed to monitor these students when they worked independently. I feel that a self-directed learning activity can be more beneficial to ESL students if teachers become more sensitive to their needs, to the extra help that some of them require, and to their various learning styles. One

of the barriers to monitoring students in an independent activity is the teacher-pupil ratio. According to Urzua (1980), social interaction is the basic method through which children will learn language, and if there are 30 children and one teacher in a classroom, then the teacher obviously does not have time to interact with all the children (p. 42). However, teachers' sensitivity to the needs of those students who require the most help to complete their assignments can foster a sense of belonging and success in ESL students.

The need for closer monitoring was exemplified in a self-directed learning activity in the computer room at Greenview School. The students of a Grade 7 social studies class were engaged in an individual project where they were required to produce a title page on multiculturalism. Julia, one of the four ESL students involved in this class, sat in front of a computer, and I sat behind her. She did not know what to do or how to access the computer program, and she went to another student for help. When her classmate did not know how to help her, Julia went back to her computer and looked for her teacher, who was trying to solve a dispute between two mainstream students over a computer. Julia waited a moment, and then decided to sit down again in front of her computer. Quietly and timidly, Julia called her teacher, who did not hear her. She tried again in a stronger voice. Her teacher said: "I'll be right there." Julia sat and waited, and her teacher left the classroom for about two minutes to find a disk for another student. The teacher returned, gave the disk to the mainstream student, but forgot that he had told Julia that he was going to be right there. He approached a mainstream student who called him because she needed some help. He explained to a mainstream student who had asked for help what she was supposed to do: "Multiculturalism and bilingualism." Julia, who had spent almost the entire class without help, went to another mainstream student to see what she was doing. Julia sat close to her, then got up and walked around the classroom, disturbed, confused, and a little impatient. In the meantime, her teacher continued to help other mainstream students. The class was almost finished, and Julia had been unable to do any work at all. The teacher asked the students to clean up and return to their classroom. It appeared that

Julia was the only student who had been unable to complete the title page. I feel that the teacher's treatment of this ESL student during the self-directed learning activity was not preplanned or discriminative; the student merely needed extra help from and monitoring by the teacher. Norah, one of the language arts teachers, suggested that facial expressions or body language could alert teachers to the fact that students with limited English-language communication skills need help.

Peer Tutoring

My findings reveal that Greenview teachers had other students besides ESL students with learning needs in their classrooms. Peer tutoring might be a strategy used with mixed-ability groups. It would help to expose ESL students to more frequent interaction with other students in the classroom; teachers would find the additional support that peer tutors could provide in their classrooms helpful. Stainback and Stainback (1990) asserted that tutoring programs are valuable for students in terms of effective instructional practices; that is, as part of the larger effort to restructure schools as learning communities, to promote heightened respect for the capabilities of all students, and as part of the broader societal efforts to promote inclusion and integration (p. 91). Providing ways to communicate with other students or setting up situations that require interactions between students could also contribute to ESL students' feeling of inclusion in the classroom.

Cultural Expectations

The City of Edmonton (1986) revealed that some problems in the school seem to be an extension of cultural expectations. What is acceptable for children in terms of responsibility and maturity in the home is not necessarily the expectation in our society and may be construed as a barrier to learning (p. 50). In this regard, it could be argued that immigrant learners respond differently to different ways of learning. Whereas some

students are more efficient working by themselves or in a self-directed learning activity, others would do better in a cooperative learning project. Castaneda, James, and Robbins (1974) commented that whereas for middle-class Anglo-American families achievement is concerned mainly with the self, achievement for Latin American families appears to be motivated by the need to make others proud of them or the need to benefit their families (p. 20), which could be considered driven by an attitude of humanism, or sensitivity to other's needs and feelings. Castaneda et al. further commented that this intrinsic awareness may explain why Mexican-American children seldom ask for help with their school work, even though they may be doing poorly (p. 21). Because they are raised to work cooperatively with each other, ESL students may do better when a curricular activity involves group participation. Castaneda et al. concluded that Latin American children do better when the curriculum involves human interaction (p. 21).

Heterogeneous Grouping

According to Ellen, one of the school facilitators, ESL students at Greenview were placed at age-appropriate levels. Wong-Fillmore (1989) stressed that LEP students placed in mixed groups are more likely to receive instruction suited to their age and cognitive abilities than are students placed in groups based on their language limitations (p. 129). Furthermore, Wong-Fillmore remarked that heterogeneous grouping of students who represent a range of English proficiency exposes learners to peers with varying English-language proficiency (p. 129). Greenview's age grouping as opposed to ability grouping was a better inclusion alternative for ESL students. Zabel and Zabel (1996) concluded that ability groups or homogeneous groups provide limited opportunities for students either to learn from or to teach one another. The result can be social: an academic stratification within classrooms that appears to emphasize rather than reduce those differences (p. 139). Within this age-appropriate grouping, the students become involved in cooperative learning activities as well.

Cooperative Learning

A cooperative learning activity is an inclusive teaching alternative for ESL students. However, my findings reveal that direct instruction was the most common teaching method practiced at Greenview School. Long and Porter (1985) emphasized that one of the main reasons for ESL students' low achievement is that they do not have enough time to practice the new language (p. 208). Fanselow (1977; as cited in Long & Porter) further remarked that some studies show that when lessons are organized in a direct instruction mode, a teacher will talk for at least half, and often as much as two thirds, of any class period (p. 208). Although direct instruction was commonly used at Greenview, students engaged in heterogeneous group dynamics as well.

Being a participant observer at Greenview made me aware of the substantial benefits of group work ESL students. Direct instruction and constantly correcting their grammar might unintentionally discourage their oral participation in the class. Long and Porter (1985) commented on studies by White and Lightbown (1983) that revealed that when ESL students pause longer than about one second before beginning to respond or while making a response, or if they appear not to know the answer or make an error, teachers tend to interrupt, repeat or rephrase the question, ask a different one, correct, and/or switch to another student (p. 211). However, small-group work motivates ESL students to learn and participate in the group discussion. Because there is no pressure to give accurate and semantically or phonetically correct answers, they are better able to express opinions, state points or participate in the group dynamics. Heterogeneous grouping where students are provided with the opportunity to relate to each other on an equal basis improves the quality of students' interaction. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1996) also maintained that when mainstreamed LEP students are placed in heterogeneous, cooperative groups and assigned specific roles, their achievement generally increases and their psychological health improves (p. 8). I confirmed that those ESL students who did not participate because of lack of self-confidence or knowledge of

English interacted more with their English-speaking peers and participated more actively in group work. Long and Porter mentioned that when two or three students work together for a period of time, they engage in cohesive and coherent sequences of utterances (p. 209). A cooperative learning activity is then an inclusive strategy for ESL students that provides them with ample opportunities to discuss and interact with each other. If exercised more often, it may increase the development of ESL students' social and cognitive skills.

Input

My findings reveal that some teachers' use of direct instruction as a teaching method failed in one important area: The instruction was not comprehensible to ESL students. Harklau (1994) identified adjustments in classroom instruction such as reducing the speed and complexity of speech; increasing repetition; pausing and comprehension checks, and contextualizing abstract concepts through the use of maps, photographs, or graphs as necessary to make the input useful as raw material for ESL learners (p. 249).

The following example illustrates how ESL students' level of understanding of the subject matter can be improved through the use of nonverbal communication, audiovisual aids, or re-explanations and constant comprehension checks. In a Grade 8 social studies class students were involved in individual or group projects. Fred, an ESL student, appeared to have trouble coping with his schoolwork and different academic activities. Generally, he appeared very shy, secluded, and distracted. Fred chose to work individually on his project, a map. I approached him to find out why he had chosen to work by himself rather than with someone else. He said: "Sometimes I forget things, and I don't want my classmates to get mad at me." When I discovered that he was not doing his work, I asked what was wrong. He answered: "I don't understand the teacher's explanations." I asked him: "Why don't you ask him?" and Fred replied: "I already did, but he asked me to come back in two minutes." He did, but his teacher was assisting another student and did not

acknowledge Fred, who did not make any attempt to attract his teacher's attention. Finally, the teacher gave him some instructions, which Fred appeared not to understand. However, his teacher made no attempt to confirm Fred's understanding, and, disturbed and confused, Fred returned to his desk. I approached the teacher and asked: "Do you think that Fred understood your explanations?" His teacher said: "No, he didn't. I think if I had explained to him in a quiet room, alone, where there is not much noise, he would have understood better. But when you have 30 students asking questions constantly, it is very hard." However, I found Fred's English comprehension and speaking skills to be well above average. I asked him: "What do you have to do with your transparencies?" His reply was, "I don't know." Fred's teacher explained the project to a small group of students, which Fred joined. Nevertheless, at the end of the class he still did not understand. Teachers must ensure that all students understand their assignments, which requires more time and may entail the use of a variety of visual aids, nonverbal communication, or more effective verbal communication skills. According to Brown (1986), educators must remember that teaching is much more than merely presenting the information; it is a process of human interactions predicated in communication that induces learning. Interaction and communication form the very essence of the process. When either is lacking, the process is doomed to failure (p. 39).

Audiovisual Aids

The data reveal that through the use of audiovisual teaching aids, teachers could have made their classes more understandable and enjoyable for ESL students at Greenview School. Handscombe (1989) remarked that academic upgrading in English can also be effective provided that the content is carefully matched to the student's academic background and a highly visual/activity-oriented approach is used to ensure comprehension of the material being presented (p. 29). Among some of the activities

carried out by the Grade 8 language arts teacher was the use of an analogy between the parts of a burger and the main components of an essay:

> The two halves of the bun are needed to keep the burger together. In the essay, the two halves, the introduction and the conclusion, hold the essay together, but they don't look the same. The meat of the burger is the substance of the meal. In the essay the middle paragraphs (2, 3, and 4) are the substance of your topic. The three paragraphs are what hold the "meat" of your topic. What about special sauce, lettuce, cheese, and onions? That is what makes a burger taste good. In an essay, smooth flows between paragraphs make the essay sound good. In other words, try to make connections between your paragraphs, or your meat is going to fall apart!

When I asked her where she had got this idea, Cynthia explained: "I got it from another college, because we work closely together." In expanding on her reasons for using audiovisual teaching aids, she said: "I don't like a boring classroom, and I find that I like to draw pictures. Through those strategies that you get from your colleagues, you learn different things as well."

Silent Reading

I found that another technique that worked well in language arts was the silent reading at the beginning of the class. Cynthia explained the value of silent reading as a strategy to help ESL students become more integrated:

> I do the silent reading at the beginning of the class every day. I do it for a lot of reasons. Some children come in late, and then there is no instructional time taken away from them. There is also the opportunity for the children to pick up a reading or a novel that is to their level.

My findings reveal that a large number of ESL students arrived in and left the classroom late. Through the use of silent reading at the beginning of the class, ESL students did not miss any instructional time. Cynthia commented: "ESL students are never the first ones in the classroom, but they are always the last ones out too."

Appropriate Feedback and Correction

One of the ways of increasing ESL students' participation in curricular activities would be providing the appropriate feedback regarding pronunciation errors in a mainstream context. Harklau (1994) remarked that, in a room filled with native-English speakers, teachers risk embarrassing learners who are extremely timid about speaking or who are subject to teasing in the classroom (p. 261). Although inappropriate correction of ESL students' mispronunciation or grammatical errors might be problematic for ESL students in other schools in the city, I found Greenview's classroom environment not intimidating or threatening for ESL students. Quiet the opposite! The few times that I observed a teacher correcting an ESL student's pronunciation, the correction was almost unnoticeable. For example, one of the ESL students was reading out loud. The teacher repeated the mispronounced word correctly, and the ESL student continued reading. Meyer (1985; cited in Wong-Fillmore, 1989) argued that corrections should be done as naturally as possible, without interrupting the flow of the learner's speech or a change in his or her meaning. For example, when an ESL student says, "We don't know how many years he have," the teacher might respond, "That is right; we don't know how old he is!" Gentle, corrective feedback allows the learner to hear how a native speaker of the language would talk (p. 140).

Moreover, overcorrecting ESL students who are participating orally in curricular activities in a mainstream classroom not only would discourage them from participating, but also would encourage mainstream students to focus more on ESL students' weaknesses rather than on their strengths; that is, the message or the idea they are trying to communicate. Additionally, Cummins (1993) indicated that constant correction of students' miscues prevents them from focusing on the meaning of what they are reading and fosters dependent behavior because students know that whenever they pause at a word, the teacher will automatically pronounce it for them (p. 110).

A successful approach to including ESL students in classroom participation would be to focus on the meaning or the idea that they are communicating rather than on the language itself. Wong-Fillmore (1989) further concluded that the focus of the instruction is the content rather than the language itself, but unless the language needed for talking about the content is considered an instructional objective, this approach will not succeed (p. 141).

Today's teachers are faced with the enormous responsibility of accommodating the various needs of their students. The increasing number of ESL students with their unique needs has become a challenge for our school's teachers. However, their behavior and the modifications that they make to the lesson structure, the clarity of instruction, redundancy, pacing, feedback, and other instructional adjustments would contribute to ESL students' successful integration into mainstream classrooms and would also offer them more and new opportunities to learn the English language. In turn, teachers' efforts to make this possible would be rewarded with evident and continuous progress of ESL students in mainstream classrooms.

Extracurricular Activities

Teachers' efforts in modifying curricular activities—more specifically, their classroom instruction—for ESL students could be one of the most self-evident functions of schooling to provide them with academic knowledge and more opportunities for interaction at school. However, there is another less explicit, but equally important function used at school, mostly for socialization purposes: extracurricular activities. They could serve as an empowering mechanism for attaining equality for ESL students.

The data gathered and analyzed at Greenview School suggest that extracurricular activities were a key empowering mechanism for ESL students. Extracurricular activities allowed ESL students to be accountable for their physical abilities rather than for their language proficiency or challenges at school. Young (1984) remarked that particular

playground practices in a single school suggest a cultural and social structure in the playground where acceptance and status are based in part upon students' display of physical performance in specific activities (p. 207). Bruce, one of the social studies teachers, corroborated this theory:

> I think that if ESL students has athletic abilities and they can "shine" in a sport, and if they can excel at basketball or running or volleyball or some other sport, it just puts them up on a pedestal in the eyes of everyone else. And if they are trying to fit in, it is important to fit in however or wherever they can. So if they fit in sports and they excel in sports and they are the captain of the team or they are one of the better players on a given sport team, then that can help them in their transition. So they have a larger group of people who are now suddenly "their friends," and with a larger peer-support group, the chances to succeed academically and socially are much better.

Students were involved in extracurricular activities mainly through the physical education program that was part of the school curriculum. Greg, one of the physical education teachers, acknowledged:

> We offer more sports teams per students than any other school in the city. There are more opportunities for them to play. We could get 70% of our student population participating on a team, wearing a uniform to play. The other 30% can participate in intramural activities, so they have plenty of opportunities. However, for some students, sports is still not for them; they have other things that they can do.

Greg commented that "the intramural program is a great way to play without having to worry about talking to people." Greg further felt that through an intramural program, students were better able to intermingle and interact because they did not have to say a great deal; they just had to throw their hands up to indicate, "I want the ball."

According to Young (1984), recognition of the cultural significance of various playground activities at the school also serves to highlight important issues regarding the equality opportunity that exists for students to participate successfully in the status-allocating activities of the playground (p. 207). Most teachers interviewed for this project placed considerable importance in promoting ESL students' involvement in extracurricular activities at school. Greg remarked:

> If they have some ability, they show some athletic talent, I don't even ask them if they want to play in a basketball team; I tell them, "You come to practice after school today." And I'll say to another student, "Bring him to practice; just grab him." Then, through playing on an extracurricular team, if they come to practice, they learn how to play the game and they excel at the game. That language barrier is broken very quickly because of their closer group of people working together. When they are on a team they become accepted very easily by their teammates.

Moreover, the data reveal that extracurricular activities encouraged through physical education classes at Greenview School provided ESL students with a sense of belonging at school. A great number of ESL students come to Alberta schools from warm climates where one of the most popular sports is soccer. According to Mr. Kinneard: "Schools in the Edmonton area tend to concentrate their extracurricular activities in basketball, volleyball, and soccer; and, of course, soccer is a number one for our ESL children." When ESL students first arrive at school, they appear to have athletic skills other than those developed through winter sports. Consequently, foreign students appear to be familiar with outdoor sports such as baseball or soccer, and participating in these extracurricular activities seemed to ensure ESL students' sense of belonging at school. Norah, a language arts teacher, commented:

> Sports is more of a doing thing; this is the chance for them to belong. If they have that inclination or interest and it becomes a very important part of belonging to something. ESL students can show that they are just as good as or better than other students. That really helps their self-esteem. So sports, music, or things where they are most active physically are really good for them, and a lot of them do participate in that because that is where they can succeed.

James, one of the social studies teachers, also alluded to this:

> If children have the ability, then that is a great way for them to get out and show who they are, what kind of skills they have, especially those boys who play soccer. We have a lot of children who come from different cultures, and they like soccer. So when they go on the field, if they have the skills, that makes them more noticeable, and people are more aware of them. It helps them to fit in.

Greenview School provided students with various extracurricular activities. Besides sports tournaments, students had a games room, which allowed them to socialize without the pressure of communicating well in English. Bruce commented that

extracurricular activities in the games room allowed all students to come in and participate. He remarked that, simply by being exposed to different games, students were also exposed to other children and cultures, and they became more accepting of each other. He further elaborated:

> In the games room that we have created this year, ESL students and other students come to play. They play games like chess, checkers, or cards. The numbers are virtually the same in most cultures; I know through the Western world and part of South America and Europe, certainly. So ESL students come in, and they play different games that don't require a lot of reading, simply an understanding of the concept of the game.

Another extracurricular activity involved the school store, where some of the students worked as volunteers and were encouraged to work there at the lunch break. According to Ellen, one of the school facilitators: "All students and ESL students are welcome to take part in it; that is a great way to interact with each other."

Moreover, activities such as using the Internet gave ESL students the opportunity to connect with those countries from which they came. It allowed them not only to be informed of what was going on in their countries of origin, but also to obtain the information in their first language. James, a social studies teacher in charge of the computer room, stated: "With the Internet students go on the different sites even using their first language, so sometimes it makes them feel a little bit at home. If they can have that experience in the school, that would be great."

Extracurricular activities were available at Greenview School for all students. However, from the teachers' interviews I discovered that not all ESL students were able to participate for various reasons ranging from lack of economic resources to lack of opportunity. Ellen commented: "Sometimes ESL students are not able to come to the tryouts because they have responsibilities at home. Often their parents are working, and they have to stay and look after the younger children."

In some cases ESL students did not seem to have the necessary skills to participate successfully in sport teams. Consequently, they did not want to put themselves on display

and preferred to withdraw from participation. Bruce commented that "because of ESL students' lack of familiarity with certain sports, there is always a chance that they maybe rejected by their peers or put down, at which point they back up and withdraw from the activity." According to Young (1994), successful involvement of students in most playground activities calls for not simply participation, but also a public display of skills. Participation without the appropriate level of skill is likely to lead to peer criticism, informal exclusion, and negative status allocation (p. 208). James added:

> Sometimes ESL students do not want to put themselves in front of everybody else. We tend to encourage them to participate, but if they don't feel confident, it is difficult to go out. They are new to a situation, and it is difficult for them to break in.

Additionally, popular sports such soccer that offer ample opportunity for ESL students to participate are male oriented, which can limit females' participation. James remarked: "Extracurricular activities are a great way for ESL students, particularly boys, . . . [to] play soccer."

Moreover, some ESL students' parents placed a great deal of importance on academics. According to some of the teachers, they saw extracurricular activities as a waste of time. The fact that they had to learn a new language, besides the regular subject areas, made it more difficult for them to participate in extracurricular activities at school. Norah, a language arts teacher, stated:

> Some ESL students' parents want them to focus on the academics only. They say to their children: "You have to learn this language; you have to do all that," not realizing that their children could benefit from being involved socially and learning to speak that way.

Nieto (1992) remarked that even in schools that provide extracurricular activities, a majority of students are not involved in them for many reasons, ranging from a lack of funds to conflicts in schedules (p. 254). The benefits of extracurricular activities to enhance ESL students' inclusion in the school are enormous. Although they seem to be available equally to all of the students, in some cases they also appear to be limited for

some ESL students, which could imply unequal educational opportunities for ESL students, or exclusion:

> The implications of noninvolvement of some students in these kinds of activities have to do with equal access. It is fine for the schools to say that activities are open to all students, but unless this policy is backed up with practices reinforcing it, it is meaningless. (Nieto, 1992, p. 255)

Extracurricular activities are one of the most important facilitators of ESL students' integration into the school system. Greenview teachers placed a great deal of value in their active participation. However, for different reasons, some ESL students remained excluded from participation. "Certain activities may not exclude them intentionally, but the result is the same. Thus, if there are no activities for students who speak a language other than English, there is a problem of equal access" (Nieto, 1992, p. 255).

The data reveal that ESL students' participation in curricular activities could be enhanced by implementing some instructional modifications for ESL students to reach their full academic potential, regardless of their English-language challenges, within a classroom environment that promotes their interaction with both teachers and other students. Additionally, facilitating their access to involvement in extracurricular activities at Greenview School would ease their cultural integration into the school system.

CHAPTER VII

INCLUSIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR ESL STUDENTS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the discussion of two of Greenview's most important approaches to enhance ESL students' integration into both the academic and cultural school environment, the Option Group and the Buddy-Up system. ESL students' involvement with other mainstream students in a support group helped them to become more self-confident and to acquire English-language skills while receiving the extra support required to succeed academically. On the other hand, this study will demonstrate how Greenview School developed a support system to help the new ESL students form meaningful relationships. These relationships helped to ease ESL students' integration into mainstream classrooms.

The Option Group: An Inclusive Approach for ESL Students

My research at Greenview allowed me to become more than an observer. After being in the school for two weeks, I became actively involved in what Ellen called the Option Group. Mainstream students who had learning and English-language challenges, along with some ESL students, were pulled out voluntarily from only their French classes. According to Ellen, the students were welcome to stay in their French class if they wanted to do so. Those students who chose not to stay were removed three times a week for additional academic or English-language support. Handscombe (1989) mentioned that academic upgrading including a basic literacy program is required for some newcomers at all grade levels beyond primary years (p. 29). It has also been argued that in regular classrooms all students have various learning levels. Therefore some students require more instruction or one-on-one academic support than others do. Sapon-Shevin (1992) remarked that, in reality, all children have abilities and strengths as well as areas in which they require more intensive instruction (p. 39). Traditionally, these differences have led to

ability grouping or ESL grouping. However, we have to make decisions about how to respond to ESL students' English-language needs in an inclusive environment where they are not segregated, but are included with mainstream students. The Option Group could be an educational option for ESL students.

In explaining her role as one of the school facilitators, Ellen mentioned some of the activities that she did in her Option Group:

> I meet with the ESL children, if they are part of my Option Group—which most of them are—three times a week. We do things such as organizing our books. I give them time to work on homework and sit with them and do their homework with them; I read their work over. I might read them a test. I make sure that they understand what is being asked of them; I can clarify things for them. The most important thing is to make sure that they are coping in their classes and that they stay on top of their assignments, because they often want to still do whatever everyone else is doing.

Additionally, Ellen mentioned that ESL students were removed from their French classes mainly because a third language posed more difficulties, challenges, and perhaps more frustration than they needed at that time. Instead, they needed that time to learn the English language and to get additional academic support.

My research approach, participant observation, led me to become actively involved with students who were placed in the school's modified program. I provided some ESL students with second-language instruction. As well, I provided mainstream students with various kinds of help needed. Through working on a one-on-one basis with some of the ESL students, I found out that, even though ESL students were removed three times a week for additional academic upgrading, they were not segregated in specialized English classrooms. The lack of specialized ESL programs for students could be considered in two ways: as an inclusive alternative and as English as-a-second-language support required for ESL students.

The data reveal that as an inclusive alternative, ESL students were not removed for only English as a Second Language support. For the most part, second-language programs could segregate ESL students from mainstream classrooms. According to Urzua (1980), it

is assumed that children who do not speak English and are already different from other children at school need to have a unique environment for learning language. That environment is not the same as the environment for native-speaking children to learn a new language. Therefore, children must be separated (p. 39). By contrast, ESL students at Greenview were included in the Option Group with some of their mainstream peers who had academic or English-language challenges. However, the data reveal that ESL students were not provided with the second-language support that they needed.

I feel that ESL students do not need to be segregated in ESL programs; they need specialized ESL instruction. However, I also feel that because ESL students require ESL instruction, this language assistance could be provided along with content-matter instruction through heterogeneous grouping or during the Option Group time. Wong-Fillmore (1989) stated that in the most effective instances of language instruction, the subject matter determines which language will be taught, rather than the other way around (p. 133). For ESL students to become included more in mainstream classrooms, they need to learn ESL through contextualization. Zabel and Zabel (1996) remarked that in language as well as in other types of instruction, teachers should attempt to put the instruction into a meaningful context and draw on personal, everyday experiences of students (p. 41). Wong-Fillmore also confirmed that language is most easily taught when it serves a real communicative function (p. 135).

The data gathered through my field research reveal that ESL students were receiving academic aid in reading, writing, mathematics, and so on during the Option Group time. Some of their academic needs were met by the extra-academic assistance they received from one of the school facilitators. It could be argued that the fact that ESL students were not removed for only second-language support contributed to their overall inclusion in mainstream classrooms.

I feel that Greenview's lack of a special language program for ESL students was compensated for in the academic upgrading received in the Option Group, which was a far

better inclusive alternative for ESL students than the segregated ESL programs are. Because ESL students did not become part of any special language program, their "special" English language needs did not become stereotyped as "different." Consequently, neither did ESL students' various cognitive levels, educational needs, and social status become stereotyped as different or deficient.

Building a Support Network for ESL Students

Most children arrive at school with no other expectation than to start long-term, meaningful relationships with their peers. Urzua (1980) asserted that children who are learning a second language expect, no less than native speakers, that school is another place in which language continues being the means by which they make contacts with others. The fact that these connections are in a language that they are just learning does not change the basics of what language is all about and what it is for (p. 39).

With the growing ESL student population in Alberta schools, the nature of the support required at school ranges from physical to human resources. In fact, it could be argued that human resources are the most vital support system required for ESL students' successful integration into the school system. Forest (1989) suggested that special education is driven by a common preoccupation with bathrooms, toilet training, and bowel movements. Although that might be true, the answer for a special-needs child is friends, love, and education (p. 13). The same philosophy could be applicable to students who do not speak English well. ESL students need real experiences and real and meaningful relationships in mainstream classrooms. Urzua (1980) pointed out that there is a belief that because children who do not speak English are perceived as different from other children at school, they supposedly need a unique environment for learning the English language. This assumption becomes the foundation for segregating ESL programs. They consistently imply to the learners that language learning must be done differently from the way it was

done while they were growing up, and that the very children they come to school to meet and become friends with will not be the ones from whom they will learn (p. 39).

Forest (1989) further suggested that if a child needs more relationships, he is being provided with fewer. In most cases he is being assigned an educational assistant, an adult who teaches him to build a one-on-one dependency. If a child needs more communication, he or she is being put into a room with 10 other children who do not communicate well, and the teachers often wonder why they do not improve (p. 13). ESL children do not need school experiences that are different from those of their mainstream peers. ESL students want to do the same things that any other regular student does in a mainstream classroom. Ellen, one of the school facilitators, corroborated this theory:

> When ESL students who are involved in the Option Group are given another choice than writing an essay for their language arts class, they still prefer to write an essay, because they often want to do what everyone else is doing.

Because there is a universal need for relationships and friendship, it is important to develop school support networks for both teachers and students; more specifically, for mainstreamed ESL students. This study has already discussed how a team approach to cooperative teaching and planning serves as a support system for mainstream teachers who are faced with cultural diversity at school. The purpose of this part of the study is to give an overview of the importance of building a support network for ESL students at school. Stainback and Stainback (1990) reaffirmed that many school personnel are finding that successful inclusion of all students necessitates more than providing one or two types of support. Instead, it often requires an array of both professional and nonprofessional supports such as buddies, friendships, and peer tutors for students (p. 9).

ESL students require a designated person who assumes a variety of responsibilities including providing them with the second-language instruction they often need. According to Stainback and Stainback (1996), many school teams designate a person to serve as an inclusion support facilitator for a particular student or for an entire school. The facilitator can help teams utilize strategies for promoting creative problem solving and ensuring

accountability by team members for successfully implementing supports for students (p. 54). As mentioned earlier, Greenview School had three school facilitators who formed what Mr. Kinneard called "the inclusive-ed. team." Besides providing support for teachers and students, the inclusive facilitator works as a resource assistant. In most cases the regular classroom teacher does not have the necessary experience to meet the children's various needs. According to Stainback and Stainback, this role may involve locating appropriate material, specialists, consultants, teachers, and other school personnel who have expertise in a particular area (p. 55). Ellen, who was closely involved in this research study, described some of her duties as one of the school facilitators:

> To be able to ensure successful integration of ESL students into Greenview School, we need to have a support system in place. I mean human resources, a person like myself who does the planning of a program and the adjustments that it requires, a person who provides the help most teachers need. I help them out. Teachers alone with these children would not be able to make it. Teachers may not have the knowledge to do the modifications required, and when you take away those supports, inclusion starts to fall apart.

Bruce, a Grade 8 social studies teacher, added:

> With the help of the extra staff that we have, people like Ellen and others like her, we are better able to create the programs to meet the specific needs of these children to be able to fit them into our regular program.

Cynthia, commenting on how Greenview School created an inclusive atmosphere for ESL students, mentioned that the positive attitude towards ESL students was caused mainly by the effectiveness of their inclusive-ed. team. She further remarked that "an effective team that works well with ESL children and other children is fundamental for successful inclusion." I previously discussed how ESL students' integration into the school system was encouraged through the various assistance that mainstream students as well as ESL students received from Greenview School's facilitator in the Option Group. I feel that this larger role that the school facilitator plays in helping all students who are having difficulty coping with educational tasks or establishing peer relationships is crucial for successful inclusion of ESL students into mainstream classrooms. Stainback and Stainback (1996) remarked that a major role of the inclusion facilitator is to encourage natural

networks of support for students. Particular emphasis is placed on facilitating friendship for students through identifying opportunities for students to make connections and presenting individual students in a positive way to others in the school (p. 54). In commenting how the inclusive facilitator provided ESL students with the opportunity to establish relationships within the school setting, Ellen referred to the school's Buddy-Up system:

> Usually, when they first come in here, I always find them a couple of "buddies," and if I am really lucky, I may be able to find them a buddy who speaks their language in their class. Then, after the first day of class, I do a follow-up. I ask whoever I had buddied up how things are going for the new ESL students.

In relation to the nonprofessional support required to ensure successful integration of ESL students into mainstream classrooms, Greenview had a support system—referred to by most teachers as a Buddy-Up system—for ESL students to develop a support network at school. Stainback and Stainback (1996) observed that one of the basic components for building connections and friendships is proximity and frequent opportunities to interact with each other (p. 67). My findings reveal that teachers involved in this project felt that new students, especially ESL students, needed to form strong bonds with other students that could result in long-lasting relationships. This philosophy was constantly brought up by most teachers when they were questioned about factors that contribute to ESL students' successful integration into Greenview School and when they were asked to discuss the unique characteristics that made Greenview an extraordinarily inclusive school for ESL students. Bruce stated: "I personally believe that ESL students can do a better transition into the school when they have other students that they can speak and relate to." He further commented:

> I think that for achieving academic adjustment, ESL students need to find a peer, someone you can relate to, someone from your own culture, someone you feel comfortable with, someone who is willing to walk you through your newfound, strange environment.

Handscombe (1989) remarked that a peer who speaks the same language is probably the best choice of person to provide orientation related to the basic rules of the

school, including treatment of other students and staff and what is or not considered acceptable (p. 26). As stated by Ellen, "When there is a new student we try to buddy up that child with another student to sort of orient them or get them used to what we do."

The benefits of fostering friendships among students, as well as providing support for ESL students, can range from sociological and psychological to communicative and cognitive skill development. Falvey and Rosemberg (1995) noted hat skills such as communicative, cognitive, and social-emotional are not a prerequisite for the development of a friendship, but rather, these skills can best be learned and practiced within the context of friendship (p. 270). Lutfiyya (1988; as cited in Falvey & Rosemberg, 1995) identified several conditions for a friendship to develop. These conditions are not characteristics of an individual student, but rather are a reflection of his or her surrounding opportunities, the people with whom he or she interacts, and the expectations of others. These self-explanatory conditions are opportunity, support, diversity, continuity and free choice (p. 268). Based on this assumption and on the data gathered as a participant observer at Greenview School, I feel that one effective way to ease ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms is to provide them the opportunity to develop diverse, long-lasting relationships at school by finding commonalties, hobbies, interests, and so on between mainstream and ESL students. Greg, the science and physical education teacher, corroborated that this Buddy-Up process was usually done before ESL students entered their new classrooms by finding commonalties between the new ESL students and either former ESL or mainstream students. He expanded:

> When we have a new student come in—in fact, all new students—we get them someone from the same class that they will put in. If I teach 8C in my homeroom, and a new student is going to be placed in 8C, whether he or she is ESL or not, one of my homeroom students will be their "buddy" for the next couple of weeks. I will ask and they will volunteer, and if I don't have a volunteer, I will ask someone in there, but they almost always want to help. You find out little things: This person is an athlete. Are they sports minded? Do they soccer, hockey, or whatever? And then you find somebody who has a common background, someone who has the same interests, place them together for a little while, and if they are not compatible, they'll split up on their own, naturally.

According to most teachers' comments, a number of times these "set-up relationships" resulted in friendship. Bruce commented: "Some of the ESL students who appear introverted find someone who makes them feel comfortable. One example would be Sandra, who has found as a cohort Janet. They have developed a strong bond between them."

The teachers agreed that for this Buddy-Up system to work effectively at school, they needed to cover all the bases. Ellen stated that when children first came to the school, they tried to give them three "buddies" so that in the absence of one of them, the new student was not going to be left alone. Moreover, Ellen mentioned that she preferred to choose a child who had been in the same situation as much as possible. Students who had been in the same circumstances knew what to do in a situation, such as the first school's dance. Most of the time, they knew how they could provide ESL students with the support required in a situation such as that. As Ellen stated, that student would say to a new student: "Yeah! I remember when I had my first school dance, I was scared to death. I didn't want to go. I sat in the bathroom all the time." So they let the new child know that it was all right to feel that way. They would say to the new child: "This is how we do it. Come with us." She further expanded:

> They know how it is like to be new at school and if I can find somebody who speaks their own language, that is even better, because the new child feels: "Oh! there is a friend here, I already have somebody.

The data also reveal that the teachers were more concerned with placing students near their "buddies" in the classroom rather than in the front or center rows. They strongly believed that ESL students' proximity to a friend or a buddy would make them feel better in the classroom environment. According to Stainback and Stainback (1990), research has indicated that proximity is a critical variable in peer support and friendship development (p. 52). The teachers felt that because students learn by observing, they needed to be close to a classmate so that they could observe Greenview students closely in the classroom. Ellen also corroborated that for them the best way to help new students to achieve cultural

adjustment to the school, not only non-English speaking children, but also children coming from other schools, was by modeling or showing them how things were done. She further remarked: "We don't teach cultural adjustment as a lesson; it just happens on a day-to-day basis." James, a Grade 7 social studies teacher, described how their Buddy-Up system helped ESL students adjust to the new cultural environment:

> Quite often when we have children coming in, students who do not have any English-language skills, we try to pair them up with somebody, and they can sit beside that person, they don't have to sit in separate desks, so that ESL student can watch what that person is doing or see what they are doing.

Greenview's school Option Group and Buddy-Up system worked very well as both academic and cultural support systems for ESL students. The Option Group served not only as an academic support, but also as a way to facilitate the formation of relationships with peers. The teachers were committed to facilitating opportunities for relationships between mainstream students and ESL students. Their objective was to help ESL students ease their transition into their new school. This friendly, cohesive atmosphere resulted in one of the most desirable inclusive environments for ESL students. A sense of community in which students and teachers care about, support, and work collaboratively with each other increases the chances of successful inclusion of ESL students into the school setting. Stainback and Stainback (1996) remarked that empirical evidence has demonstrated that in schools in which teachers do not establish friendships, commitments, and bonds with each other, there are increased problems with underachievement, student dropouts, drug abuse, and exclusion from mainstream classrooms (p. 194). Equal access to education involves equal opportunities to remain and become successful in the school system.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis was intended to identify what constitutes a more inclusive and effective learning environment for ESL students at a junior high school level. The research study, conducted at Greenview School, examined ESL students' and mainstream teachers' and students' attitudes and interactions at school, teaching practices, students' behaviors, and the role of the school administration in integrating ESL students into regular classrooms in particular and the school system in general. Accordingly, the material collected for analysis was gathered and focused on my research questions: (a) What kind of inclusive environment do ESL students experience in mainstream classrooms? and (b) What impact will these issues have on ESL students' success or failure at school? Based on these research findings, it was fundamental to address one more focus question: How could ESL students be better included in mainstream classrooms? The data gathered through qualitative research was carefully sorted and selected by content, with strong emphasis on inclusive alternatives for ESL students. In other words, the data gathered encouraged us to rethink the role of the school as an agency for promoting inclusion for ESL students. Various themes emerged from my research findings. They, in turn, provided some interpretative generalizations that are summarized and discussed in this chapter. Peshkin (1993) commented that interpretation not only engenders new concepts, but also elaborates existing ones (p. 26).

Wolcott (1988) claimed that, ordinarily, an outsider to the group being studied, someone who uses ethnographic techniques for research analysis, tries harder to discover more about the cultural system that he or she is studying than any individual who is a natural participant in it does (p. 189). As an outsider to the situation being studied, my cultural and professional background as well as my broad and analytical perspective on the cultural group examined, helped me to make some suggestions to teachers as to how they

could adjust the classroom instruction and modify their input for non-native English speakers. Spindler and Spindler (1987) suggested that a significant task of research conducted through using ethnographic methods is to make what is implicit and tacit, explicit to informants (p. 19). My task as a researcher was to explore avenues that could assist ESL students in their understanding of the subject matter to increase their participation in academic activities and their integration into the school system. Issues concerned with teachers' expectations for ESL students were addressed. Enhancing students' positive attitudes and encouraging acceptance of cultural diversification in a classroom environment alone are not the sole aims of inclusive education. For effective inclusion of ESL students into mainstream classroom, it is necessary to devise methods of helping ESL students to maximize their participation in academic and nonacademic school activities and in this way enable them to succeed in the overall school environment as well.

Summary of the Findings

My findings reveal that the learning environment for ESL students at Greenview School was cohesive and friendly. The school administration, teachers interviewed, and students generally exhibited a positive attitude towards each other. These harmonious relationships among teachers and between teachers and the administration appeared to be founded on cooperation among themselves and mutual respect for each other. My findings reveal also that these unique characteristics, in turn, appeared to be the basis for ESL students' feelings of acceptance and comfort at school.

Moreover, this study concluded that the physical complexion of most ESL students was not a barrier to their cultural integration into Greenview School. However, I perceived an underlying stigma attached to being an ESL student and having academic challenges or not doing well at school.

My research findings reveal also that Greenview School's teachers were not fully aware of ESL students' linguistic needs. They were not acquainted with the mechanisms

of the English as a Second Language acquisition process. Consequently, although ESL students required it, they were not provided with appropriate second-language assistance. However, most teachers involved in this project agreed that ESL students did not have the academic English-language skills to follow the subject-area curriculum. A truly inclusive learning environment for ESL students would have multifaceted teachers who have a broad understanding of the dynamics of the second-language acquisition process.

My findings reveal that ESL students were better able to integrate into mainstream classrooms by not being segregated or removed from their regular classrooms into segregated second-language classrooms. My research study arrived at one important generalization: Specialized second-language programs for ESL students could be an exclusionary option for them. Thus, I feel that when ESL students are removed from regular instruction to "special" ESL classrooms, they become separated from the mainstream. Handscombe (1989) observed that separation denies learners of English access to fluent English-speaking models other than the teacher and therefore fails to capitalize on an important source of help in all schools (p. 30). Moreover, being excluded from regular instruction does not allow ESL students to have the opportunity to develop relationships in regular classrooms with either mainstream or other ESL students. As a result, they mingle only with other students who have similar characteristics and similar language difficulties. There was evidence that in other schools across the city, ESL students preferred to remain secluded in the "security" of their ethnic group. Sittanur Shoush, a 17-year-old student, commented that ethnic grouping could become a vicious cycle. "When you walk into a school, and you see all Chinese children together and all the White children together, and all the Brown children together, of course, you are going to where you feel most comfortable" (Simmonds, Findlay, & Moore, 1996, p. H14). Nevertheless, I realized that at Greenview School this was not the situation. Greenview's ESL students were involved with their mainstream peers and with other ESL students in both curricular and extracurricular activities, in regular classroom activities, and in the

Option Group. I feel that this positive and cohesive learning environment for ESL students was a result of the school's lack of segregated ESL programs for ESL students and its replacement with the Option Group.

The Option Group

I also arrived at another generalization: The Option Group could become a more effective solution for ESL students' integration into mainstream classrooms. Mainstream students with learning and English-language challenges along with some ESL students were removed voluntarily from only their French classes three times a week for additional academic or language assistance. As has been constantly stressed in regular classrooms, all children have abilities and strengths as well as areas in which they require additional help or more prolonged instruction. In segregating schools, students' English-language challenges may lead to ability grouping of students or ESL grouping. However, in an inclusive setting, addressing ESL students' language needs means making decisions about how to respond to their needs within a learning environment that suits all students.

I feel that the Option Group could become a more efficient inclusive alternative for ESL students if during this academic-support time ESL students are provided with some second-language instruction as well.

Testing and Its Implication for ESL Students

Language ability may become the premise for students' classification or segregation. Rodriguez (1994) acknowledged that labeling or classifying students has become a common practice and approach for a variety of reasons. The danger is that the label can become a stigma because labeling allows for differential treatment (p. 104). So often it is assumed that, because of ESL students' difficulty communicating in English, they are slow learners or low achievers. Consequently, ESL students' labeling could be reflected in teachers' lower expectations. Wong-Fillmore (1989) remarked that the

problem with ability grouping is that it almost always results in these students having quite different educational and linguistic experiences than are available to students who are more proficient in English (p. 129). Nevertheless, the structure of our present educational systems calls for students' classification according to their academic, physical, or language skills. New ESL students in Greenview School were English-language tested through the Woodcock-Munoz language survey that determines the CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) levels to qualify for a three-year funding cap. Additionally, ESL students were ability tested through TONI II (Test of Nonverbal Intelligence), an ability test designed especially for students who have English-language challenges. Accordingly, they were placed in the school's modified program.

Greenview's Modified Program

Some ESL students who needed second-language assistance and academic support were placed in the school's modified program with the underlying idea that this approach would smooth their transition into mainstream classrooms. However, this solution appeared to have negative side effects for some ESL students. Nevertheless, I feel that this educational solution, if implemented properly, could benefit new ESL students. Rosenthal (1992-1993) suggested that a transitional program for ESL students should be focused on what the instructor does in the classroom rather than concentrating on LEP students' challenges (p. 63). My findings reveal that ESL students' involvement with other mainstream students in support groups helped them to become more self-confident and improve their English-language skills while providing them with the extra support required to succeed academically. However, I feel that for the school's modified program to become a positive educational alternative for ESL students, Greenview needed to redesign internal policies regarding ESL students who require additional support when completing Grade 9.

As was explored through this study, in theory, ESL students at a junior high school level are able to pursue academic high school education. However, in practice, this right is hindered by the fact that some ESL students who require more time and academic support to complete their junior high school education successfully are denied the opportunity to pursue an academic route if their marks are not satisfactory at the end of Grade 9.

This study concluded that ESL students who require educational supports at the end of Grade 9 needed to be provided with equal access to high school education. That is, they needed to be able to go on to Level 10 courses or regular academic instruction at a high school level without being penalized with making a vocational choice because of their perceived English-language challenges. ESL students have the right to equal educational opportunities and quality of education within the Alberta educational system. A vocational choice for ESL students based on lack of "ability" to integrate culturally and academically into the school system would contribute only to the legitimization of unequal ethnic and social relationships in Canada. Directing junior high school ESL students to enroll in schools with segregated ESL instruction that provides, at the same time, different occupational or vocational choices, in turn, would feed the inequality of educational opportunities for ESL students in some Alberta schools.

Cooperative Planning

This research study demonstrated that cooperative planning had a tremendous impact on ESL students' integration into a school. At Greenview School the teachers worked closely together. They approached every unit by discussing required changes and adjustments, and methods of evaluation. With the encouragement of the school administration and the support of the inclusive team, most teachers tried to accommodate the various needs of their students. The teachers appeared to understand that by achieving small sequential successes, all students and, more specifically, ESL students could be better incorporated into the school. However, the school-community's efforts to work

together for the students' benefit would not succeed if they did not have the students' own commitment and their families' support and cooperation.

Increasing the Involvement of ESL Students' Parents in Their Children's Schooling

According to Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1995), the academic and linguistic growth of ESL students is significantly increased when their parents see themselves, and are seen by the school staff, as educators of their children. Schools should, therefore, actively seek to establish a collaborative relationship with ESL students' parents in order to encourage them to participate in furthering their children's academic progress (p. 30). One of the broad generalizations I drew from my research study was that Greenview School's ESL parents did not participate in their children's academic and linguistic development or in their schooling.

Although the lack of involvement of ESL students' parents in their children's education at school was an issue of inclusion, this study did not explore in depth the social reasons for the parents' lack of involvement in their children' schooling. However, the data reveal that these reasons could range from the parents' lack of English-language skills to lower levels of self-esteem resulting, in most cases, from their lower socioeconomic status in Canada. Cummins (1993) suggested that the dominant group controls the institutions and reward systems within society. Within this present framework, the dominated group, which is formed of visible minorities, is regarded as inherently inferior by the dominant group (p. 105). If ESL students' parents see themselves as "inferior," they transfer their powerlessness to their children's educational institution by withdrawing from participation in their children's education.

The discussion of this issue could go even further. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that a large number of immigrant children are faced with the barrier of their parents' illiteracy. This circumstance risks ESL students' successful academic inclusion in the school system. Cummins (1993) observed that ESL children's school failure can then

be attributed to the combined effects of parental illiteracy and their lack of interest in their children's education. Because parents often do not know how to help their children academically, they are excluded from participation in their children's schooling (p. 109). However, under normal circumstances the average Canadian-born child of Canadian parents relies on parental help or academic support.

The involvement of Greenview's ESL students' parents seemed to be one of the most important factors that contributed to ESL students' inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Sincere efforts to provide direction for ESL students' parents' participation would reduce their absence from their children's schooling. In this way, instead of being exclusionary, Greenview School would become more inclusive for ESL students' parents and, more importantly, for ESL students.

The Learning Environment for ESL Students

This study discussed the impact of the classroom environment on ESL students' integration into regular classrooms. Additionally, this research study found that the physical setting also affected the classroom learning environment. Children's learning, behavior, thinking, and attitudes are affected by the physical setting. However, a classroom environment that is interactive, caring, sensitive, encouraging, and supportive also affects ESL students' integration into the school. Enright and McCloskey (1985) confirmed that children's second-language development is facilitated by a comfortable classroom atmosphere; that is, one that encourages and celebrates efforts at communicating, focuses on the meaning of the utterances rather than on their form, and treats errors as a normal part of the second-language acquisition process (p. 436).

This study thus came to the generalization that creating a truly inclusive environment would require teachers to think of different ways to organize their classrooms; that is, one in which students are able to interact with each other. Nevertheless, I was aware that the transformation of any given traditional classroom into

one that enhances students' interactions with each other would be a big challenge for some teachers; more specifically, for those teachers who are concerned primarily with classroom-management issues and in schools where there are rigid policies regarding classroom management. Enright and McCloskey (1985) argued that even those teachers who become totally convinced that a communicative classroom environment is best will probably find it necessary to alter other equally strong and well-developed teaching beliefs and teaching patterns emanating from the stereotype of the "good classroom." They will also have to explain to others the changes dictated by this "new" model (p. 436).

This study was not interested in challenging teachers to make serious changes in their classroom settings. Greenview's ESL students adjusted fairly well to the school, which led me to conclude that the concerns of Greenview's teachers that students need to establish relationships in the classroom were far more important than redesigning the current physical setting to create a special physical environment for ESL students. These teachers were more concerned with ESL students' proximity to a friend or "buddy," which they strongly felt would make them feel more secure in the overall classroom environment.

Teachers' High Expectations for ESL Students

The discussion of teachers' expectations for ESL students was crucial to this study. ESL students, just as any "regular" students, need to succeed at school. This means meeting expectations of teachers. The question is, How do teachers set their expectations for ESL students? Zabel and Zabel (1996) found that in high-achieving schools, teachers expected the vast majority of students to work at grade level and to complete their assignments. Conversely, in lower-achieving schools, teachers tend to have lower expectations for student performance (p. 126). Regarding equality of education for ESL students, ESL students' equal treatment at school should be based on teachers' setting equal expectations for all students; more importantly, on setting high expectations for ESL students. Rodriguez (1994) remarked that expectations have a direct effect on teachers'

behavior; they determine how teachers view themselves and interact with others. The term *self-fulfilling prophecy* means that students perform in ways that teachers expect (p. 104). Communicating low expectations for ESL students creates a vicious cycle. The long-term effect could be that ESL students set low expectations for themselves. If ESL students become less productive, teachers reaffirm their perceptions of them as "low achievers."

I found relevant to this research study to discuss teachers' need to communicate high expectations to their ESL students. According to Levin and Nolan (1996), teachers communicate low expectations toward students by behaviors such as

> 1. Calling on low achievers less often to answer questions. 2. Giving low achievers less think time to answer questions when they are called on. 3. Providing fewer clues and hints to low achievers when they have initial difficulty in answering questions. 4. Praising correct answers from low achievers less often. 5. Criticizing wrong answers from low achievers more often. 6. Praising marginal answers from low achievers, but demanding more precise answers from high achievers. 7. Staying further away physically and psychologically from low achievers in the classroom. 8. Rarely expressing personal interest in low achievers. 9. Smiling less frequently at low achievers. 10. Making eye contact less frequently with low achievers. 11. Complimenting low achievers less often. (p. 103)

This study resulted in a generalization regarding teachers' expectations for ESL students: Teachers do not need to lower their expectations to make their objectives achievable for their ESL students. Conversely, one important consideration when including ESL students in mainstream classrooms is teachers' high expectations. Wong-Fillmore (1989) remarked that research conducted in California revealed that when the level of instruction provided was high and when teachers were demanding in their expectations of students, the Hispanic students excelled (p. 129).

My findings reveal that setting high expectations for ESL students did not necessarily guarantee ESL students' success. For them to succeed in meeting teachers' expectations, they needed to be provided with the necessary conditions: meaningful academic activities where ESL students were able to achieve their full academic potential regardless of their English-language challenges. Levin and Nolan (1996) contended that, besides influencing low achievers to learn more by communicating high expectations for

them, equalizing response opportunities, teacher feedback, and personal involvement, students' learning can improve (p. 103). Zabel and Zabel (1996) added that it is hard to imagine students learning in environments where instructional goals are obscure, where learning activities are not engaging, where behavior is disorganized and chaotic, and where expected outcomes are uncertain (p. 126). In summary, setting high and clear expectations for all students is related not only to good instruction, but also to excellent classroom-management skills and equal opportunities for ESL students at school. Brown (1986) concluded that a reasonable approach would be to explain rules, expectations, and the range of consequences for nonperformance, which would encourage students to make appropriate choices while at the same time affirming their right to choose (p. 24).

Facilitating ESL Students' Participation in Extracurricular Activities

This study revealed that Greenview School provided all of its students with access to extracurricular activities. However, for various reasons, some students did not participate. My findings show that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, ESL students' exclusion from extracurricular activities could be considered an issue of *equality* or *equal access*. A truly inclusive environment would seek the active involvement of ESL students in nonacademic activities at school. The concept is that by promoting or implementing meaningful and practical extracurricular activities, the school could contribute to ESL students' inclusion in the school system. This study did not explore in depth what kinds of activities could be offered. However, outdoor or indoor sports, stamp collecting or recipe exchanges, involvement in current events or other types of activities at the church or various cultural clubs would be some suggestions.

Finally, to make extracurricular activities available to those students who are unable to participate because of family obligations, Greenview School could coordinate volunteer babysitting services with groups across the city. Participation in activities that are not part of the school curriculum fosters ESL students' integration into the school

system. It would be worthwhile for the school to pursue different methods of improving or facilitating ESL students' access to extracurricular activities at school.

A Support Network for ESL Students

This study reveals that Greenview School's support network for ESL students is one of the most successful inclusive alternatives for ESL students. New ESL students met their expectations for developing long-term relationships not only with their Canadian peers, but also with other ESL students. For the most part, this approach was a reflection of an inclusive school's philosophy that contributes to students' successful integration into the school system. Greenview School's Buddy-Up system worked well as an inclusive strategy and a support system for ESL students. The teachers appeared to be committed to facilitating the opportunity for ESL students to develop relationships with other students. Their objective was to ease ESL and new students' transition into their new school, which resulted in a friendly and cohesive atmosphere that made Greenview School a desirable inclusive school for ESL students.

We must decide which type of learning environment we want for our students; more specifically, for our ESL students in Alberta's schools. Our Canadian society is becoming more increasingly diversified, and every unsuccessful and unhappy ESL student at school today will most likely become a high school dropout tomorrow. "Keeping minority students in schools costs money; but it costs a lot more if they drop out of school" (Hill, 1989, p. 43). If we truly want our immigrant students to have equal opportunities for advancement and success, then we should maximize their participation and facilitate their access to educational and social opportunities. Providing the professional support that they need and advocating the formation of strong peer networks at school ensures a more prosperous Canadian society that promotes wider social acceptance and peaceful co-existence.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teachers' Interviews

1. I have observed that this school has a positive attitude towards ESL students. I know it is not like that at other schools. What do you think Greenview does in bringing about this inclusive atmosphere? What factors have led you to develop this inclusive environment?
2. How do you identify an ESL student?
3. I have observed that that some students are quiet in class; some of them do not participate in academic activities in class. Why do you think this happens?
4. What is an ESL student's typical behavior when first arriving at an English-language school?
5. What are the ways you could ensure successful integration of ESL students into Greenview School?
6. For ESL students to achieve cultural adjustment, what kinds of conditions have to be created? What can a teacher do to help ESL students achieve cultural adjustment? What do other students do? What can ESL students' families do?
7. What factors are important for achieving academic adjustment?
8. How do ESL students participate in extracurricular activities? What kinds of extracurricular activities do ESL students participate in?
9. What might stop an ESL student from participating in extracurricular activities?
10. What might stop an ESL student from participating in academic or curricular activities?
11. What sorts of strategies do you use to deal with students who have limited English communication skills?
12. How would you describe one of your classes? What sorts of activities do you develop in your classes?

13. How could you make your learning objectives more flexible for ESL students?
14. What physical conditions should be created for ESL students in a classroom setting?
15. It seems to me that this school has a positive atmosphere for ESL students. How did that come about? Is there anything else that could be done if you had more resources?
16. What it is that you do that helps ESL students' inclusion in regular classrooms?
17. Now, let's talk about teachers' expectations. What do you expect from your students in general, and what do you expect from your ESL students in particular?
18. How do you think ESL students can achieve successful integration into the school? What are the factors that contribute to ESL students' academic integration?
19. Do you think that these students are going to make it to Grade 12? What do you base your judgment on?
20. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on regarding ESL students' integration into the school system?

ESL Students' Interviews

1. How long have you been in Canada?
2. How do you feel about this school?
3. What is it that you like the most about this school?
4. What do you like the least about this school?
5. Who helps you the most with you school work?
6. What do you think about the explanations or the instruction given by your teachers? Are they clear?
7. What kind of vocabulary do your teachers use in class? Do your teachers use very difficult vocabulary?
8. Is there any way that these explanations could be improved?

9. How would you like to be helped with your English and other courses at school?
10. Are your teachers fair to you?
11. Who are your friends at school? Where are they from?
12. Do you feel that if you knew how to speak English well, you would have more friends?
13. Do you feel accepted at school?
14. Are you able to participate in all of the school activities that you want to?
15. What would you like to see different at this school?
16. Being an ESL student means extra work. Do you feel that you are putting in all the required effort? Or do you feel that this is too much and get discouraged?
17. What do you do to improve your English?
18. Do you speak English at home?
19. Do you read English outside the school?
20. Would you like to go on to Grade 10?
21. What do you think you will do when you grow up? Will you go on to university or college?

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, TEACHERS, AND ESL STUDENTS' PARENTS OR GUARDIANS

Explanatory Letter

(Administration, Teachers, ESL Parents/Guardians)

April 27, 1997

Box 1344
Edmonton, Alberta
T1M 2G9

Mr. Or Mrs. Participant
Box 4413
Edmonton, Alberta
T6B 4P7

Dear Mr. Or Mrs. Participant,

I am presently working on my project, *Inclusion of English as a Second Language Students into Mainstream Classrooms,* in order to fulfill my requirements for my master's degree in education at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of my project is to identify elements of a more inclusive environment for ESL students in mainstream classrooms. I am inviting you/your child to participate by allowing me to be part of the ESL students' daily experiences in the classroom environment. I also would like you to allow me to interview you/your child and know your/his/her insights into ESL students' present situation at school.

As a previous ESL student, I am aware of some of the challenges that ESL students face when integrating into the education system in Alberta. This research aims to further understand how to meet ESL students' needs at school.

I truly appreciate your valuable contribution to make my master's thesis possible.

Carmen Bird
Graduate Student, University of Alberta.

Observation/Interview Consent Form

(Teachers and Administrators)

I agree to participate in the interview/observation (or study) upon the following conditions, and shall freely withdraw from the interview/observation (or study) should I feel that the conditions are not being met:

1. The researcher has explained to me in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study.
2. My participation in the study is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw without risking penalty or loss.
3. I will remain anonymous in the study, and the raw data from the observation and interviews or any other interaction during the study will remain confidential. The data will not be used to my disadvantage; no person other than I and the researcher and her professors will see the raw data.

_____ _____

Study participant/respondent's name Signature

_____ _____

Date Place

_____

Carmen Bird

Observation/Interview Consent Form

(ESL Students' Parents/Guardians)

We/I allow _____ to participate in the interview/observation (or the study) according to the conditions described below. _____ will be free to withdraw from the interview/observation (or the study) should we/I feel that the conditions are not being met.

1. The university student has explained to us in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study.
2. _____'s participation in the study is voluntary, and he/she has the right to withdraw without risking any penalty or loss.
3. _____ will remain anonymous in the study, and the information obtained from observation/interview or other interaction during the study will remain confidential. The data will not used to his/her disadvantage; no person other than I and the researcher and her professors will see the raw data.

_____ _____

Study participant/respondent's name Signature

_____ _____

Date Place

_____

Carmen Bird